

**SONGS IN THE KEY OF LIFE: THE *MUSICAL*  
*HABITUS* AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S  
COMMUNITY MUSIC PARTICIPATION**

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# ABSTRACT

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Community arts initiatives have risen quickly up the agendas of policymakers and local authorities alike in recent years. In particular, low-cost and flexible community arts projects have increasingly been framed as an effective means of combating social exclusion and contributing to neighbourhood renewal. Yet at a time when the community arts movement is benefiting from unprecedented levels of funding and rhetorical backing, the need to resolve complex questions surrounding evaluation, outcomes and conflicting agendas persists.

Focussing upon the community music participation of 'young people living in areas of social and economic need who might otherwise lack opportunity' (Youth Music 2006), this thesis seeks to make a key contribution in the developing academic study of community arts activities. The study draws upon and adapts the work of Pierre Bourdieu in proposing a theory of *musical habitus*. This theory recognises the significantly socially *structured* and *structuring* elements of actors' habitus and the implications of their correspondingly varied valuations at the level of musical meaning. On the basis of an appreciation of actors' *musical habitus*, the degree to which specific forms of community music participation initially appeal to and sustain the interest of young people is portrayed as responding to patterns of a quasi-predictable yet at the same time indeterminate nature. The theory of *musical habitus* seeks to be of heuristic value to those hoping to comprehend the outcomes of community music participation and respond to calls for the community arts to 'identify best practice [and] understand processes and the type of provision best suited to achieve particular outcomes' (Coalter 1991).

The study was undertaken in collaboration with the Learning and Participation Department of The Sage Gateshead. Taking four cases studies, the methodological approach was participatory and ethnographic and the data collection methods employed included participant observation, informal group discussion and semi-structured interviews.

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# CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Prelude

I'm surrounded by a series of tiny footprints in what my feet hope is the last of this year's snow. A nearby cow signals its presence. As I stroll over towards a barbed wire fence for a closer look, I'm stopped in my tracks by a dry-cold gust of wind. I take several more steps away from the car and gaze away into the distance where I'm greeted by the ominous spectacle of the black Cheviot Hills, their broad sides clouded by a cloak of misty grey rolling in from the east. Night has begun to fall and the wind greets me with another chilling volley. Gazing around, I take in a series of images reminiscent of my childhood – farmers' fields, dirt paths, grazing livestock, the woods off in the distance. Suddenly, though, my attention is stolen away by the glow of car headlights rearing up in front. A large 4x4 rumbles by, circling over the tiny footprints before coming to a temporary halt, next to what I now discern to be the entrance to an old barn. Three children in thickly hooded coats hop out of the vehicle, turning to acknowledge what sound like instructions from the driver. Nodding back their comprehension, they close the doors and wave goodbye. The children spot me and three cheery grins greet my gaze. The oldest-looking of the three now pulls a gloved hand from her pocket and reveals a key which she inserts into the barn door. The three of them disappear inside. Silence again. Now more headlights are rounding the corner, this time parking up beside the local youth block. As the car door swings open there follows the murmur of Trinidadian souka and the familiar figure of community musician Helen emerges wearing a colourful cardigan and bobble hat. She waves me over and we exchange greetings. "Anyone else here yet?" she asks. "Three smiley little cherubs have just gone inside that barn" I reply, pointing. "Ah, The Tremors" Helen enthuses, "time to play some pan!"

Over the course of the next few hours I'm warmed through, not by the woefully inadequate electric heater around which I huddle, but by the sunny sounds of what can only be one of the few youth steel pan ensembles to be found in the outer reaches of Northumberland. "The Tremors", as they are aptly known, are actually the little sibling group to this community music project's main band, "SteelQuake" – a group composed

of 25 or so young people from Wooler and its outlying area. SteelQuake band members come together twice weekly to learn and play with band leader Helen, mostly to “drill” the band’s steadily expanding repertoire to within another inch of its life. At this point in its development, learning, practising and performing for approximately three years, the band has built up a repertoire of around 30 popular songs. They cut their teeth playing local fetes and agricultural festivals before moving further afield, upping their hire charges and expanding their sound. Upon my arrival I learn that several of the band’s members recently returned from the project’s second trip out to the world steel pan band championships, “Panorama”, in Trinidad, where they had again competed. Indicative of this project’s aspirational edge, there’s a mild sense of disappointment that last year’s third place finish has not been bettered this time around.

A week later I’m revisiting a different project, wending my way through a series of now familiar alleyways and passages in the shadow of Byker Wall – a long, unbroken block of maisonettes built in a functionalist-romantic style located in the East End of Newcastle. Back when “the wall” (as the locals know it) was built in the 1970s, a new future was envisioned for industrially declining Byker. Today though, Byker estate, of which the wall forms a significant part, is one of the most deprived wards in inner city Newcastle and, as such, the whole country. Having heard what might most diplomatically be described as “mixed” reports about the area, I’m trying my utmost to blend in, to look casual and remain unnerved. This isn’t easy given the ricochet of a firmly struck football and the whoops accompanying the rattles and thuds sounded by its contact with the metal grille only feet from my baseball-capped head. “So much for blending in” I muse, “they’re not buying the cap look at all”. “They” are a group of around 15 local lads in their mid- to early teens who are playing a game of kick-the-football-over-the-youth-centre. It’s a game with curious, changeable rules; every five attempts, it seems, extra kudos can be earned by pile driving the wet ball towards the stranger standing by the entrance to “our youthie”. At 7.30pm prompt, youth manager Janice unlocks the doors and emerges from inside the youth centre. She’s timed this badly; the lads are in pile driving mode and Janice almost becomes the first victim of the night. A gently chastising expression on her face, Janice’s broad Northern Irish

accent cuts clearly through the lads' nervous laughter: "You nearly hit my there, so you did!" The lads look relieved.

Moments later, a jumbled queue made up of adolescent lads and lasses has formed, their hands digging into tracksuit pockets for their 25p entrance fees. "Youse haven't paid for two weeks now!" Janice reminds the two lads at the head of the line, their faces smudged with dirt. "Are the decks on?" they reply. "Aye. are the decks ganning on?" hollers an older-looking lad further down the queue, football under his arm. "Not until yiz all calm down" offers Janice. The lads didn't calm down much, not until the record decks and microphones had been set up and the nightclub-style lighting turned on in the youth centre's main space. Off in another of the centre's rooms, two community musicians were demonstrating the art of "beat-matching" to Brian, an aspiring DJ. The local lads and lasses refer to their preferred style of music as "new monkey": a high tempo blend of techno, "acid" house and modern, commercial dance music sounds accompanied by a rapid and insistent stream of live "rhymes" delivered by one of more MCs. I'd witnessed a similar style of music making only a few days before yet in the present instance, the effect of the music's volume, the lights and the hugely enthusiastic crowd gathered around the DJ booth generated a far more intense atmosphere.

The approaches to music making adopted in the Byker and Wooler projects barely brook comparison. Besides, in either case, the young people brought very different attitudes to the participatory encounter; the way they described their prior experiences of music making differed markedly, the stances they adopted towards playing and learning music were at variance and the meanings they derived from musical practices also appeared to vary, as did their musical aspirations. Indeed, as I was later to discover, the ways the young people of Wooler and Byker located meanings both "in-the-music" and "in-the-music-making-activity" spoke of what might be described as substantially dissimilar *ways with music*. By this I mean to refer to the whole relation individuals might have to music as sound, to music as a signifier or initiator of emotional, psychological states, to the way music is afforded and forges distinct roles in everyday lives. Not that there were no significant similarities between some of the participants of the two projects (one of the SteelQuake band members spoke of how, on occasion, she

listened to what she termed “charva beats” – a term for something very close to the Byker lads’ new monkey). Rather, what was striking was the extent of divergence evident between these two groups of young people’s interpretation and use of the multiple elements making up music as sonic phenomenon, music as adjunct to social interaction, music and, in short, numerous variously meaningful aspects of young lives. These variances led me to try to further understand and conceptualise the nature of such diverse relationships to music and music-related activity (themselves variably intertwined), a path eventually leading me to borrow a term from the French thinker Pierre Bourdieu in postulating the notion of a *musical habitus*. This concept provides a means through which we might think about actors’ dispositions towards music and music-making activity as well as the factors that serve to expand or inhibit their scope and make-up. As such, the concept of *musical habitus* demonstrates its direct relevance to such matters as the up-take, continuation and outcomes of young people’s participation in community music projects.

Above and beyond the participants and their varied dispositions towards music, the social, geographical and material settings in which their music making and playing took place also held their own import. While the SteelQuake project in Wooler benefited from the exclusive use of a converted tractor barn as its pan-yard, in Byker, as has been described, a busy youth centre provided the setting for the community music activities. Contrast Wooler’s relative geographical isolation (and the wide area from which project participants were drawn) with the densely populated Byker Wall estate (and the close proximity of its youth centre) and further factors, each with the potential to influence the functions, appeal and scope of these two projects emerge. Supplementing this an appreciation of the different resources at their disposal, the varying styles of the community musicians involved, the different make-up, organisation and commitment of each project’s partnership<sup>1</sup> and a picture of two quite dissimilar sets of activity emerges even more clearly.

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<sup>1</sup> A project “partnership” is the joint and collaborative support structure that acts to provide CM activities. Thus, for example, two of the partnerships behind the chosen case studies of CM activity were made up of CoMusica employees working together with the youth workers of particular youth centres; in another instance, a project partnership consisted of the collaborative efforts of CoMusica employees and school staff.

These two adventures in community music were part of a wider project, exploring two additional projects, which looked at the effects of participation in community music activities upon young people's lives and their broader outcomes for host communities. Given the relative paucity of academic investigations of community music activity, a particular aim of the study was to provide a basic conceptual framework for thinking about its varying forms and the various axes along which the key elements of community music project functioning typically shift. Following this, a further aim was to explore the ways different outcomes accrue in relation to the features of participation identified. Another part of this story involved developing an appreciation of the ways young people approach music making and of the different connections and spheres which both affect and are, themselves, subsequently open to the influence of their creative musico-cultural activity.

The study was undertaken in collaboration with the Learning and Participation Department of The Sage Gateshead, an organisation charged with the development of a programme of community music activity across the north of England. My immersion into the organisation began with an induction onto the community musician traineeship provided by The Sage Gateshead. Following this I acquainted myself with a range of their projects, all the while exploring relevant policy documents alongside the sociological literature concerning music, cultural creativity and youth. Selecting several projects as case studies, I went on to undertake periods of participatory fieldwork with each, exploring, questioning, testing and ruminating on the precise nature and purported role of youth-based community music initiatives all the while. This thesis is the product of that journey.

## **1.2 Community Music: Background and Definition**

Considering the variance of the community music activities in Wooler and Byker respectively, I quickly came to appreciate why practitioners had such difficulty offering easy definitions. Indeed, were one to fail to appreciate just how broad a scope of activities community music might comprise, you could be forgiven for thinking that it suffered from something of an identity crisis. In truth, and judging by the reactions and assumptions of those asking me "So what do you do?" over the course of recent years,



community music isn't so much generally misunderstood by most people as, along with the other community arts, simply considered a bit mysterious. A recent report published by Arts Council Wales, would appear to sum up the UK situation well: 'In general there is confusion at all levels about precisely what is meant by the term community music' (Arts Council Wales 2004: 5).

One means of gaining an insight into precisely what community music is in the modern UK context, is to go back to the foundations of the community arts movement – a movement born, in Britain, in the late 1960s. At this time, community arts was less the movement it is today than a loose collection of activists and youthful artists who adopted unconventional methods in their practice. For many of them, the community arts offered another way to embrace the zeitgeist of the day, one that viewed radical cultural and political activity as a means of overturning the oppressive instrumental rationality that had dominated the political and social landscape of post war Britain. In *Community, Arts and the State: Storming the Citadels* (1984), community artist Owen Kelly characterises the guiding philosophy of community artists of the late 1960s as holding to 'a temporary cosmic truth: "We have no art, we do everything well"...along with the idea that "everybody can do everything"' (Kelly 1984: 10). Artists belonging to this first wave of the community arts movement were consciously aiming to develop work whose principal concerns were as much to do with an alternative society as they were to do with creating and asking questions with art; essentially they were incorporating elements of radical activism with a specific artistic approach.

By the early 1970s, the burgeoning community arts movement had begun to attract funding from central government. This occurred despite the movement having no real manifesto or set of definitions and goals, but rather a loose and general set of terms that were never defined in any great detail. In fact, this was a conscious and pragmatic effort from a movement keen to retain its particular ideological leanings and not allow itself to be pinned down to a specific set of functions that could ultimately undermine its ideology. Although convenient to both community artists and the Arts Council of England at the time, the nature of this relationship, once established, had significant implications for the community arts as, over time, the ostensibly rudderless movement

became further subject to central government's view of what it was and might be best suited for. With concern growing from within the Arts Council about the ideological leanings of those calling themselves "community artists", throughout the 1970s and 1980s the movement's goals came to be subtly shifted. Concern moved away from encouraging the personal and social effectiveness and empowerment of groups and individuals through their participation towards placing greater emphasis on simple involvement (participation) in creative arts practice.

Due to the changes affecting community music over the course of the last 40 or so years, definitions can diverge considerably from practitioner to practitioner, often depending upon the point in time at which their work began. On the one hand, established and experienced community artists, whose links with the movement lean backwards, towards its roots, tend to retain more of the ideologically-informed understandings of their work (albeit far less explicitly expressed than was the case back in the 1960s and 70s). Meanwhile, younger practitioners, not as experienced or au-fait with the movement's heritage, tend to view the work in more pragmatic and utilitarian, less idealistic and theoretical ways. Differing definitions of community music thus reflect its shifting social functions and varying relationships to successive governments' policies down the years. In view of this situation, a truly modern definition of community music activity, one that takes account of the way it is practiced across different contexts, must have, built into it, an acknowledgement of the wide degree of variability evident in its numerous modern incarnations.

The policy statement of the Community Music Activity Commission (CMAC) of the International Society for Music Education (ISME) reflects this situation, broadly stating that community music is 'a vital and dynamic force that provides opportunities for participation and education in a wide range of musics and musical experiences' (ISME 2003). Hoping to add further detail to such a definition, Kari Veblen (2004) has suggested that one way of conceiving of community music is to consider it in relation to the following five issues: (a) the kinds of music and music making involved in a project; (b) the intentions of the leaders or participants in a programme; (c) the characteristics of the participants; (d) the interactions among teaching-learning aims, knowledge, and

strategies; and (e) interplays between informal and formal social-educational-cultural contexts.

In relation to (a), we can alert the reader to the huge variety of music making styles which might take place under the rubric of community music; any genre of music may be used and the work may or may not form part of cultural and arts events, be linked with celebrations, ceremonies, rituals, play, leisure or education. Of (b) it ought to be recognized that community music is often characterized by a commitment, primarily on the part of practitioners, that the overall function of the music making activities be developmental for the individuals and groups involved. With regard to (c) it ought to also be borne in mind that while participants can come together under a variety of pretexts, there often remains an emphasis on access for all and on participants' involvement being self-motivated. It is perhaps worth noting at this juncture that despite community music's reliance on the word "community", practitioners typically grapple with the challenging details surrounding the latter's meaning. Programmes may, for example, engage a community which defines itself in terms of geographical location, a community may equally define itself along cultural grounds, with reference to artistic concerns, else may come as a re-created, virtual or imagined community. Indeed, the very looseness of the term "community", combined with the fact that many elements of community music practice were born in the late 1960s – elements which remain recognizable within the movement today – has led some commentators to note how the term "*community* music" may actually be something of a misnomer:

It could be that the community 'tag' is unhelpful – 'alternative' might be a more appropriate choice of word, for community art has much in common with the alternative cultures of the '70s and '80s alongside which it grew and whose philosophy was essentially holistic and anti-orthodox, like alternative medicine and alternative energy.

(Cole 1999: 143)

Of (d), we should note how projects usually focus on active music making and applied musical knowledge. Having volunteered to take part, participants may, in some instances, be expected to assume complete responsibility for their own learning and direction, while in other cases projects may adopt more explicitly didactic approaches.

This implies the possibility of multiple learner/teacher relationships and processes. Consequently, a recurring theme across the gamut of community music activity concerns the fluidity of knowledge, expertise, and roles. Finally, point (e) alerts our attention to the way activities bear varying degrees of “formality” in both educational and broader, social terms. Programmes based within educational establishments may adopt more formal, educative inclinations in line with their setting, while those projects not aligned to formally constituted organizations or associations may demonstrate much greater freedom in their practices, although again there exists no widely recognized set of criteria.

Veblen’s five points are instructive and my own necessarily broad definition of community music largely falls into line with it. That said, in order to more clearly articulate the essence of community music, I believe it important to place greater emphasis on what must be considered its undoubtedly defining feature: the combination of music making with social goals. While participants’ uninhibited access to variously formal musical activities, using a host of musical styles, indisputably defines much that is community music, I would also keenly advocate a definition which stresses a commitment to, above all, enabling participation in creative musico-cultural activity, especially for those previously unsupported in this. This picture seeks to develop Veblen’s point (b), beyond an exclusive focus on active music making and applied musical knowledge, to one encompassing what I term musico-cultural or music-related activity also. Associated with this is the belief that community music’s starting point is always the competencies and ambitions of project participants. These ideas will receive further attention throughout the course of this thesis.

### **1.3 Need for the Research**

Since 1997, the level of interest in community arts on the part of policy makers, educationalists and community development agencies alike has increased considerably in the UK. Such a growth in the attention devoted to the community arts falls in line with the Labour government’s recognition of the potentially significant role of culture in urban regeneration and more especially in its desire to see the community arts

playing a part in tackling social exclusion. The oft-cited PAT 10<sup>2</sup> report to the Social Exclusion Unit (DCMS 1999), for instance, made the government case clear when it concluded that the arts, cultural and recreational activity ‘can contribute to neighbourhood renewal and make a real difference to health, crime, employment and education in deprived communities’ (DCMS 1999: 8). This document suggested a number of reasons why this was the case: such activities appeal directly to individuals’ interests, develop their potential and self-confidence, encouraging collective effort and building positive links within the wider community. That said, the PAT 10 report also recognised the lack of evidence on the regeneration impact of arts and cultural experiences. This situation gave rise to a growing policy and research interest in the social impact of the arts with the focus turning ever more on the contribution of the arts to social inclusion and neighbourhood renewal.

Since the PAT 10 made such bold yet largely unsubstantiated claims, arts organisations, evaluators and numerous commentators have increasingly turned their attention to the matter of demonstrating how participation in arts activity can result in positive effects for participants and their communities, with a number of research reports published since 1997 (Matarasso 1997; Moriarty 1997; Williams 1997b; Blake Stephenson Ltd 2000; HDA 2000; Hill & Moriarty 2001; see Jermyn 2001 for a review). These reports claim that the outcomes for participants of arts activities can range from increased self-confidence, educational attainment and health, to the development of practical and social skills, well-being and social capital. At the level of the local neighbourhood or community, benefits including improved social cohesion, community empowerment, self determination, local image and identity as well as the development of local enterprise, improved public facilities and reduced offending behaviour have been cited. Indeed, such was the recognition received by one report, Francois Matarasso’s influential *Use or Ornament: The social impact of participation in the arts* (1997), that the research was cited by the then Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, Chris Smith, in his speeches (Smith 1999).

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<sup>2</sup> “PAT” stands for Policy Action Team. Numerous policy action teams were set up by central government in 1998 to look, in an integrated way, at the problems of poor neighbourhoods. The PAT 10 report to the Social Exclusion Unit focussed on the contribution that sport and the arts can potentially make toward neighbourhood renewal.

Interest in supporting more arts activity has also been growing from within primary and secondary education. While the *All Our Futures* (NACCCE 1999) report made a powerful case for increasing the number and scope of opportunities for young people to participate in creative activities within their schools, Creative Partnerships<sup>3</sup>, an initiative aiming to make such opportunities a reality has, to date, been developed across 36 areas in England. heralding the importance of music's role in this step change for the role of creative, artistic activity within educational contexts comes "The Music Manifesto" (DfES 2005a), a campaign for improvement in music education. Over five years this project aims to garner support and lobby policy makers to provide greater opportunities for children and young people to develop their creative potential through music<sup>4</sup>. A further initiative seeking to bring together education and creative activity in the arts is the "The Arts Award"<sup>5</sup>, a scheme that recognizes and accredits the creative progress and development of young artists and young arts leaders between the ages of 11 and 25.

Such recent efforts at reaffirming the value of young people's creative activity responds to the findings of those such as Harland et al. (2000), whose report on arts activity in schools argued that it has positive effects on the culture of the school and the local community (including parents and governors). Perhaps most pertinently (given the uses to which central government sees the arts being effectively put), the report produced by Harland et al. suggests that many of the effects of arts activity in schools, such as improved self-esteem, and personal and social development, are highly pertinent to the task of tackling disaffection and social exclusion amongst young people. With particular respect to music in schools, the same study did, however, conclude that it was

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<sup>3</sup> Based at Arts Council England, Creative Partnerships is a programme of activity which helps schools develop long-term, sustainable partnerships with organisations and individuals including architects, theatre companies, museums, cinemas, historic buildings, dance studios, recording studios, orchestras, film-makers, website designers and many others. Funding from the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) and the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) has recently supported the creation of 20 new Creative Partnerships areas, in addition to the first 16.

<sup>4</sup> To this end, three taskforces (made up of the Manifesto's signatories together with experts) have set out with three goals: firstly, to support music teachers and encourage more musicians to teach; secondly, to better co-ordinate the millions of pounds worth of investment in out-of-school music activity and finally, to encourage children's involvement in singing activities.

<sup>5</sup> In seeking to encourage and reward young people's involvement in a range of creative activities and tallying these with the attainment of formal qualifications, the ultimate aim of the Arts Award, in line with the thinking behind Creative Partnerships, appears to be that of reinvigorating formal educational through an engagement with young people's creative cultural activity.

‘the most problematic and vulnerable art form’ at GCSE level, and that ‘pupil enjoyment, relevance, skill development, creativity and expressive dimensions were often absent’ (Harland et al. 2000: 568).

In view of such claims for the arts, subsequent reports and research projects have focussed ever more closely on their scope, effectiveness and role in countering social exclusion (DCMS 2001; Long et al. 2002). Most recently comes Jermyn’s (2004) *The Art of Inclusion*, a report drawing together findings from 14 case studies that focuses exclusively upon the practice and outcomes of arts activities seeking to foster social inclusion. While reiterating many of the findings of previous research, Jermyn’s offering also provides a sober reflection on the numerous difficulties associated with understanding the effectiveness of arts activities that seek to produce social inclusion outcomes when she states how her research ‘has possibly raised more questions than it answers’ (Jermyn 2004: xi). Jermyn is not alone in seeing the need for greater precision, clarity and specificity in research into the outcomes of community arts activity; numerous commentators have pointed to significant difficulties over recent years.

As was noted by Matarasso back in 1996, considerable methodological difficulties face any attempts to quantify the effects, on actors, of participation in locally-based, small-scale creative arts projects. Even in instances where methodological problems have been recognised and attempts made to accommodate them, much of the research carried out to date is still considered anecdotal and has been criticised by commentators for its lack of robustness and occasionally simplistic and misleading use of statistics (see, e.g. Coalter 2001; Merli 2002). Perhaps more problematically, certainly in terms of creating a sound knowledge base, definitions of concepts (such as “social cohesion”) are often missing from community arts-focussed research reports, many of which present case study findings in a generalised manner. Indeed, some commentators have recognised that one of the major problems with many community arts reports issues from the fact that they often appear more concerned to simply advocate the work rather than to actually provide substantiated findings:

Despite - or perhaps because of - what is now the prevailing orthodoxy, it has become increasingly pressing for a distinction to be drawn between advocacy and evidence, potential and actual fact.

(Selwood 2002: 10)

A variety of explanations have been offered for the relative ambiguity of the field's research outputs. Some have cited the nature of arts work and a cultural "resistance" among arts workers to evaluation, while others have suggested that except in the very limited context of funding relationships, the arts world has shown little interest in developing evaluative systems through which to prove its value (Matarasso 1996). Irrespective of the root of the ambiguities surrounding research into arts initiatives and their outcomes, it is clear that a number of key issues need to be addressed by the field as a whole. Significant amongst these, and picked up by this thesis, is the problem noted by Coalter (2001) that attempts to understand arts projects often reflect a presumption that many of the processes involved are generic. Harland et al. (2000) made a similar point in suggesting that the term "the arts" may be unhelpful if it leads to policies which incorrectly assume that the gains and benefits associated with one art form are broadly the same as those of others. In truth, there is great variation across arts programmes in terms of working practices and principles, programme aims and objectives, settings, the nature and quality of experiences, artist-participant relationships and so on. Any lack of precision concerning different forms of arts participation thus effectively 'reduces the ability to identify best practice, understand processes and the type of provision best suited to achieve particular outcomes' (Coalter 2001: 15).

At present, then, there remains a lack of rigorous analysis of what works and, if so, how it works. What is called for is a more developed understanding of fitness for purpose, of what is realistically achievable within given contexts, of how scaling up or varying the nature of provision might generate better levels of participation in not only music making but also the range of music-related, cultural activity. There also needs to be a better understanding, on the part of arts evaluators, educators and the community music movement as a whole, of the ways such factors as contexts, processes, genres, musical activity forms and settings affect the outcomes experienced by different groups of participants; projects employing, for example, percussion workshops rather than DJing tuition or projects engaging participants with behavioural or emotional difficulties as



opposed to those unaffected by these. These are amongst the issues that this thesis consequently seeks to address. In examining such factors, I aim to explore not only the key elements at work in bringing about what are currently considered to be the “desired” outcomes of community music activity, but also the range of other, more nebulous and ambiguous outcomes, be they negative or simply unpronounced. The way to achieve this is to move beyond assumptions about the outcomes of participation in arts activities and to define and examine more systematically the nature of the desired and unintentional outcomes of particular projects. Once achieved, this work will provide both practitioners and policy makers with a stronger understanding of impacts as well as informing the planning and execution of projects.

The way such an investigation can most fruitfully progress is by looking beneath what have been termed the “strategic”<sup>6</sup> (Coalter 2001) outcomes of arts activity, focussing instead on the “intermediate”<sup>7</sup> outcomes out of which the former develop. This approach offers the promise of developing an understanding of how, and to what extent different kinds of participatory musical activity fosters personal social capital outcomes (through encouraging actors to develop networks and the norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness that arise from them). Such an approach also ought to reveal how participation encourages personal confidence and self-esteem or contributes to educational effects for individual participants. By focussing attention upon the participatory encounter – the point at which individuals and small groups actively engage in participation and derive effects from it – it will be possible to generate a fuller understanding of precisely how different forms of participation impact upon different individuals and groups in the ways they appear to.

In placing the emphasis primarily on the quality and nature of participants’ experiences, the above-outlined approach seeks to transcend the typical view of both participants and participation as “generic” or of the participatory encounter as a “black box” upon whose basis little, if anything, might be anticipated, expected or predicted. This thesis aims to

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<sup>6</sup> According to Coalter (2001), “strategic” outcomes include those relating to social inclusion measures such as economic development, health improvements, crime reduction and so on.

<sup>7</sup> “Intermediate” outcomes, again following Coalter (2001), are broader and more amorphous outcomes such as a sense of local identity, increased social cohesion and improved quality of life.

take up such matters with rigour, supplementing an appreciation of the variability of participatory musical contexts with one of the differing dispositions embedded in the prevalent dispositions and attitudes of those approaching them. In this, the concept of *musical habitus* will figure prominently. This is not the first time the concept of habitus has been applied to matters musical; Becker (2001) for instance, writes of the potential utility of conceiving of actors' modes of music listening as a *habitus of listening*, while Toynbee (2000) discusses the value of conceiving of a *musicians' habitus*, particularly in relation to the creativity of popular musicians. These authors have both sought to use the Bourdieuan concept of habitus to undertake important theoretical work. The particular value of habitus in relation to music and musical experience is that it conjoins subjective actors with objective social structures in a way that maintains the importance of both in the achievement of individual dispositions. Significantly, although habitus does not obey explicit rules or laws, it nevertheless still describes a tendency for a person to act in a regular manner since its overriding operation is practical and hence, confused. As such the concept retains indeterminacy at its core and provides scope for adaptation.

My own use of habitus also calls upon the concept's ability to uncover more about the ways subjectivity converges with objects, yet seeks to go much further, exploring both specific and more generally observable features of actors' *musical habitus* and looking to relate these to the particular ways in which individuals and groups tend to dispose of music and its different meaningful dimensions. This approach involves uncovering how actors' relationships to music respond to the possibilities and constraints implied by their subjective, yet variously socially *structured* dispositions, together with the objective positions inscribed in certain spheres of musical activity. It also involves supplementing an appreciation of actors' attitudes towards music and musical activity with further features of the Bourdieuan habitus. This draws our attention to the ways actors' schemes of classification, evaluation and subsequent action find much of their basis in different stages of socialisation as well as encouraging us to acknowledge how habitus is both unconsciously embedded in, and finds its expression through bodily operations.

Naturally, these features of habitus emerge as central in a concept of *musical habitus*, particularly since they urge us to consider the bases upon which actors come to view particular forms of musical or musico-cultural activity as more or less appropriate and accessible to them. The concept of *musical habitus* also provides the possibility of exposing, at a more fundamental level, those elements of experience and action to which different young people's musical activities relate. As such, the concept holds the potential to provide insights into the outcomes of participation in particular forms of musico-cultural activity both for individuals and within specific, socially structured participatory contexts. To date, no sociologists have sought to relate Bourdieu's concept of habitus to musical experience and action in such a thoroughgoing way, one which considers music as a rich resource in terms of its potential meaning for individuals whilst simultaneously maintaining in clear view its more decidedly social operations and attributes. That said, considering how musico-cultural activities are scarcely studied in ways that seek to go beyond instances of their reception, interpretation and consumption, this ought not come as too much of a surprise. Undoubtedly the recent upsurge of interest in creative cultural activity as a means of helping vitalise and regenerate communities, in putting musical participation and community music to decidedly social ends, means that a concept capable of performing the theoretical work of *musical habitus* provides a much needed basis for further study.

#### **1.4 Research Background**

This research takes as its focus four case studies of community music projects within the CoMusica programme of activity – a programme developed, directed and managed by The Learning and Participation Department of The Sage Gateshead. The Sage Gateshead is primarily a live music venue<sup>8</sup> yet one which also devotes considerable attention to the activities of its Learning and Participation Department, the aims of which are to bring about a widespread and long-term enrichment of the musical life of the North of England. The building itself, opened in 2004, is a unique £70 million centre for live music designed by Norman Foster which stands on a landmark waterfront site, between the Baltic Contemporary Visual Art Space and the famous Tyne Bridge, forming part of the Newcastle/Gateshead Quayside development initiative.

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<sup>8</sup> The local, national and international concert programme runs all year round. It incorporates all kinds of music including acoustic, indie, country, world, folk, jazz, electronic, dance and classical music.

CoMusica is a community music programme developed for young people in the Northern Region. It was the first major community music scheme instigated and managed by The Sage Gateshead as part of its pre-opening programme. Focusing on those aged between 0-18, CoMusica is largely funded by Youth Music<sup>9</sup> and forms one of its 22 national Action Zones<sup>10</sup>, the aims of which are to develop music making activities in identified areas of social and economic need. Since 2001 CoMusica has developed community music projects in Carlisle, Seaham, Darlington, Weardale, the Furness peninsula, Newcastle, Wooler, West Cumbria, Redcar and Cleveland. By 2005, 1,450 young people from across the region had taken part in its music projects and events (United Kingdom Parliament 2005). Each local project involves one or more musicians in devising and running workshops and music activities with young people, leading the training of young apprentices and volunteers, and collaborating with other arts, community and education initiatives in the area. As well as working on their individual projects, CoMusica musicians (also referred to hereafter as “workers” and “practitioners”) are part of a development and training network involving all project partners, led and managed by The Sage Gateshead’s Director of Learning and Participation.

CoMusica’s stated aims, in line with those of its primary funding organisation, Youth Music, are ‘to generate and support a high level of musical and personal aspiration in children and young people who have had least access to creative opportunities, for reasons of economic, demographic or geographic exclusion’ (see Appendix I<sup>11</sup>). The participants of this research project consequently consist of those young people perceived by CoMusica as falling within this broadly defined group. The variety of project contexts and settings, types of music activity provision, partnership

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<sup>9</sup> Youth Music, an organisation receiving National Lottery funding through Arts Council England, works alongside the formal and community-based sectors to support music making and training. Its mission is to ‘to provide high quality and diverse music-making opportunities for 0-18 year olds’. In particular, Youth Music funding ‘targets young people living in areas of social and economic need who might otherwise lack opportunity’ (Youth Music n.d.).

<sup>10</sup> The Youth Music Action Zones are made up of a consortium of experienced partners that link together organisations from the public, voluntary and private sectors.

<sup>11</sup> Appendix I consists of the CoMusica Overall Evaluation Document. This provides information about CoMusica’s aims and objectives, as well the means to be employed in measuring success against these, throughout the period of this project’s fieldwork.

organisations and variously “at-risk” young people thus offered reasonable scope for the selection of cases of community music activity that exhibited both significant similarities and differences.

Taking the potential scope of the research together with the extant data relating to young people’s musical preferences, their diverse approaches to music making and their associated social characteristics (see, e.g. Roe 1992, 1995; Green 1997; Hargreaves & North 1997; Zillman & Gan 1997; Harland et al. 2000; North, Hargreaves & O’Neill 2000; Green 2001; O’Neill 2002) this study is well positioned to uncover some of the factors most influential in bringing about the outcomes of young people’s participation in creative musico-cultural activities and to assess the degree of variance evident in this across social contexts and musical genre-worlds or taste cultures. The adopted approach is also capable of offering insight into the particular relevance or salience of what commentators have presented as general “best practice principles” across the community arts, highlighting those of particular importance within the varying contexts of youth-oriented community music activity.

### **1.5 Research Aims and Methods**

As mentioned above, the aim of this research project was to seek to understand how the different features of community music projects interrelate, within different contexts, to bring about their different outcomes. In this, the study also sought to develop a theoretical framework of heuristic value to those attempting to understand the connections between the outcomes and meanings derived from the different forms of musical participation undertaken by variously “excluded” groups of young people. These aims imply a need to examine the three key aspects of the participatory community music encounter; firstly, the dispositions and attitudes brought, by young people, to their participation; secondly, the nature, functioning and processes involved in different participatory contexts (alongside a consideration of young people’s reactions to these) and, lastly, the ways different forms of community music provision, settings and project partnerships relate to the above.

The aim of exploring the first of these elements – the bases of young people’s attitudes and dispositions with respect to music and participation in music making activities – involves uncovering how young people generate and perceive of musical and music-related meanings. In this, I also sought to understand the motivational bases of young people’s community music participation and the nature of any obstacles to participation. Also addressed here is the patterning of those factors limiting participation, across groups, as well as the correlations evident between the levels and forms taken by young people’s participation and other characteristics (such as their previous experiences of music making and learning, degree of school commitment, social class background, gender). The ultimate intention of this strand of the investigation is to develop a theoretical framework and set of typological categories of value to those attempting to understand the factors determining young people’s participation decisions and the implications of these for the development of participatory processes and outcomes.

The second element of the aforementioned approach focuses more explicitly upon the nature of different participatory contexts and the activities undertaken within them. Through uncovering young people’s responses to the processes of which their participation is composed, correlations and comparisons might be made across projects, thereby leading to a greater understanding of not only participants’ varying valuations but also of the ways these connect to the outcomes of their experiences. The third and final element of the study seeks to comprehend the way different forms of community music provision, settings and project partnerships serve to determine the constraints and opportunities faced by particular projects, again feeding into an understanding of the ways projects, partnerships, forms of participation and their outcomes arise.

The methods adopted to meet the above aims are predominantly qualitative; the principal reason for this is that gleaning an understanding of the subjectively experienced effects of young people’s community music participation and the multiple factors determining its nature each call for an in depth approach to data collection. Consequently, this project adopts a participatory, part-ethnographic approach, involving a high level of participant observation, interaction and discussion with the three major stakeholders of community music projects (participants, project partners and

practitioners). In addition, informal interviews and focus/activity groups were used as a means of ascertaining the nature of young people's relationships to music, music making and participation. Practitioners, project partners and partner support workers were also interviewed where possible; data that granted insights into those factors structuring the participatory opportunities ultimately provided.

The research design used in-depth case studies as a means of allowing for the collection of rich individual and context specific detail and the comparison of a number of project dimensions. Initiatives based in urban and rural contexts, formal academic and informal spaces and employing different forms of musical activity (thereby appealing to different groups of young people) were chosen for their ability to disclose a range of participatory processes and thus facilitate the development of an overarching framework of ultimately broad applicability. Four case studies from the CoMusica programme were selected, each of which was studied intensively over the course of several months. Given the networked nature of the CoMusica programme and its active encouragement of collaborations, celebrations and gatherings between its projects, the study also involved visits to a variety of other contexts of community music-related activity. In preparation for my own participatory<sup>12</sup> involvement in the project case studies, I also followed the CoMusica community musician traineeship for six months and subsequently attended numerous project planning meetings, supplemented the practical work of practitioners and helped plan, organise and run youth music events.

## **1.6 The Way Forward**

The structure of the thesis broadly mirrors the three key aspects of the participatory community music encounter outlined above. Before this, however, Chapter Two lays the theoretical groundwork for the study in three sections. The first of these deals with music and its meanings. It explores musical-meaning-as-textual-and-interpretive and music-as-sound before supplementing these perspectives with an appreciation of “musical objects” and “musical subjects”. Having outlined the various potential sources, for actors, of the meanings of music and music-related activity, I go on to introduce French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu's notion of habitus into the discussion. Following an

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<sup>12</sup> The nature of my vacillating participatory role is outlined fully in chapter 3.

explanation of the concept's development and application, I make a case for the notion of *musical habitus*, subsequently outlining the way such an idea can be most usefully put to use to aid understandings and explanations of young people's musico-cultural activity. The final part of Chapter Two addresses the matter of participation more fully, drawing out of the participation literature the primary participatory processes relevant to instances of community music activity and providing a framework for thinking about these. By the end of the chapter, the scene is set for a discussion of the study's findings: before this is attempted however, it is necessary to first outline the approach adopted to data collection and analysis.

In Chapter Three the key methodological issues entrained by the study are outlined in full. I first explore the context of the study (that of an ESRC CASE studentship), disclose my immersion into the field of community music activity, my involvement in the CoMusica traineeship before discussing the ways in which these experiences cast the study into a new light and called for a degree of project reorientation. Following this, the research design is explained along with the rationale adopted for the selection of case studies. The next section draws upon fieldwork experiences to explore issues of access, positionality and role negotiation. Confidentiality, consent and ethical issues are subsequently addressed. At the chapter's close, substantive detail pertinent to the four case studies undertaken is provided.

Chapter Four, entitled "Formations of *Musical Habitus*", resumes the exploration of this concept's value and utility from Chapter Two, this time developing the argument through the addition of substantive empirical material. In this, attention is first turned to the role played by "primary musical socialisation" in influencing the *musical habitus* of the research participants. Following this, a section focusing upon music and education explores how actors' variously predisposed *musical habitus* interacted with the musical opportunities made available within formal educational contexts. Having surveyed the breadth of opinion offered by respondents, I then move on to posit the emerging trends and patterns discernible within different participating group members' *musical habitus*. What are termed "musical ties" – the real-world social interactions and friendships resulting from, and informing participants' musical



experiences – are next explored. Returning to the matter of musical meaning, the chapter continues with a discussion of the key aspects of meaning, experience and action disclosed and variously valued by the participants studied. Chapter Four concludes with a discussion of how the concept of *musical habitus* may grant a means of understanding the ways significant aspects of young people’s musical lives imply relationships with broader elements of their lives.

The function of Chapter Five, “Community Music Participation”, is, as its title infers, to examine in closer detail the nature and processes of participation evident across the four projects studied. The rationale for the chapter is as follows: firstly, I introduce the matter of community arts participation, with explicit reference to recent developments in the field. Moving on to focus more specifically on the matter of participation in the community music projects studied, I firstly provide an overview of the salient features and significant variances of each of the four projects’ participatory contexts, before exploring, in the main body of the chapter, the testimonies of participants and the substantive outcomes of the projects studied. Following this, I seek to draw out the underlying processes serving to generate the variable outcomes witnessed across projects in light of the prominent aspects of participants’ *musical habitus*.

Chapter Six, “Conducting the Tune”, aims to draw out, categorise and discuss the key factors at play in the provision of the community music activity across the case studies. The approach to be adopted in this involves examining, in turn, each of the four primary processes of participatory project development. The first of these, project initiation, begins with an examination of the conditions surrounding the establishment of the four projects, how they developed appropriate project partnerships and the ways this intersected with the acquisition and application of the resources at their disposal. Next, I turn to consider the second process, project preparation – chiefly a function of project partnerships. The third section, concentrates on the way projects facilitated participation, drawing out implications of this for the young people involved. This chapter’s final section addresses the matter of project continuation, through an exploration of the immediate prospects for continuing and ultimately sustaining

activities. The chapter ends with a discussion of how partnerships might most fruitfully conceive of their project's future potential.

The concluding chapter begins by restating the thesis' aims and demonstrating the means through which these have been met. Following this, the discussion broadens out onto an exploration of the complex nexus of relationships at work within community music projects, providing an examination of this study's findings for community music practice, for policy and for theory. I next go on to outline the limitations of this study and their implications for further study before closing with a brief personal reflection on the study and statement about the challenges facing UK-based youth-oriented community music activity.

# CHAPTER 2: SOUND FOUNDATIONS

## 2.1 Introduction

As yet, community music (hereafter CM) has not been examined in such a way as to uncover the nature of the relational dynamic between specific activities, local cultural contexts (and the significance of related fields of aesthetic meaning within these) and outcomes for both participants and projects. My aim in what follows is to lay the theoretical foundations for an approach to the study of CM activities which recognises the inherent variability of the distinct forms of cultural activity all too often falling under the brute rubric of “music-making activities”. The approach is eminently practical; it seeks to expose the mechanisms at play in the generation of personal and social outcomes, thereby better placing stakeholders in community arts projects to respond to calls to ‘identify best practice [and] understand processes and the type of provision best suited to achieve particular outcomes’ (Coalter 2001).

I begin by attempting to resolve conflicts between divergent conceptualisations of musical meaning; any adequate exploration of the role of music-related activities must be firmly grounded in an understanding of how music serves to generate meaning and how these meanings serve as guides for social action. In this section I seek to integrate, rather than seeing variously adopted perspectives as set against one another. Following this, I go on to explore the nature of musical subjectivity: how does musical “taste” or “preference” function, how is it established for actors and what are its implications for the meanings and outcomes of different types of musical activity? To tackle these issues I introduce a number of relevant and useful concepts from Bourdieu, paying particular attention to *habitus* and *field*. Having outlined some of the central themes of Bourdieu’s work, I subsequently investigate the utility of this framework for thinking about instances of musical experience. The resulting discussion provides the basis for the original concept of *musical habitus*, outlining the ways in which this can provide more detailed insights into the opportunities and constraints involved in actors’ uptake of musical activity than has been previously been proposed. The final section goes on to suggest a view of CM projects as “participatory contexts” that are composed of a number of key elements. These elements are discussed before I move on to posit some

of the significant ways in which they might be said to interact with components of the *musical habitus*.

## **2.2 Music and Meaning**

The nature of music's relationship with human life has puzzled some of the most highly regarded thinkers in western civilization since the time of Plato. Numerous theories have been proposed, deriving from a variety of perspectives, yet there appears to be no easy way of formulating the precise and complete nature of this thing we call "music", let alone the multifarious ways it has, does, and might yet relate to human experience. If there is one thing that might be concluded with certainty from the many and varied accounts of musical experience and musical meaning proposed down the millennia, it is that music plays a special, if mysterious part in human life. That no one theory has managed to attract anything close to a general consensus, even within the precincts of western civilisation, should perhaps serve as indicative of the inherent variability of musical experience from place to place, time to time and culture to culture.

Indeed, the principal difficulties plaguing attempts to provide a singular, coherent account of different musical experiences and their relationship to human life relate to matters at the very heart of music itself. Here we might usefully isolate three significant aspects of musical experience that have provided the basis for divergent approaches to its study. Firstly, since all musical products can be seen as sharing the properties of intentional sound production and reception, basic universal properties of the listening experience (and the effects of organised sound on the human ear) have been sought. A second approach sees musical experience as tied up closely with social activities and individuals' personal practices; theories have consequently been proposed with regard to the ways music functions *for* individuals and groups. A third set of concerns focuses on the way musical products function as texts whose interpretation is therefore seen as paramount in attempts to grasp their meaning and significance. Given the wealth of research material accumulated, relatively few consistent commonalities have been established in regard of the relationships between the nature of specific sound materials, their social role and representational meaning and the personal and social activities accompanying them across variant cultural settings. This has led to an increasing recognition in recent decades

that standardised and standardising approaches to music and its social relations will rarely yield insights of great value; at the level of theoretical abstraction alone, little can be learnt about the meaning(s) of musical experiences as they interact in the lives of groups and individuals. In order to clarify the position adopted in this thesis with regard to musical meaning, it will be necessary to briefly present and review perspectives on its origins.

### **2.2.1 Musical Meaning as Textual and Interpretive**

Since the Enlightenment, a common element of the philosophical approach to music within western thought has been its portrayal as an object bearing specific properties that render it amenable to analysis. Philosophers such as Hegel, Kant, Schopenhauer and Adorno along with noted musicologists such as Langer and Meyer, taking as the paradigmatic musical form that deriving from the western “high-art” tradition<sup>13</sup>, based their understanding of musical meaning and musical experience on the structural elements inherent in musical works. Much of the musicological thinking of the twentieth century has followed suit in seeing musical meaning as existing by virtue of the relationships between and within melodic, rhythmic, harmonic, timbral, textural, formal, etc., elements.

Analysis of such a kind, functioning in a way analogous to linguistic structuralism, is known as musical “structuralism”. Within the field of linguistics, structuralism refers to a method of analysis based on semiotics/semiology, the science of signs. Both were developed by Ferdinand de Saussure to provide the theoretical foundation for the comprehension and communication of meaning through language. Structuralism arises from the understanding that for human activities to have meaning, an underlying system of conventions must exist to make meaning possible. Hence within a structural semiotic system there exist different signs - these differences being central to the production of meaning - made up of a signified and a signifier. The signified is the mental notion (be it concept or object) of the sign and as such is immaterial; the signifier is the material representation of the notion, the spoken or written word. Through gaining experience of

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<sup>13</sup> That tradition, developed within western societies since the Renaissance, which typically takes classical music composed by one of the “great” composers and performed in symphonic form as its musical ideal.

the association of the signifier and the signified, individuals come to create a two-sided psychological entity combining, for example, the signifier “apple” with the mental concept of an apple<sup>14</sup>. These concepts provide the basis for structuralism and semiotics, and taken together form the approach which holds that meaning exists within a sign system. In order to explain how a particular human activity or product can carry meaning and be understood, structuralism requires us to uncover the conventions which enable the human subject to make sense of the encounter.

Musical structuralism follows this rationale, incorporating semiology as a tool through which to understand how musical elements (melody, rhythm, harmony, etc.) signify, or act as signs within musical discourse. Here, for instance, the composer’s use of mid-range semi quaver arpeggiations for piano might be seen as “code” for the babbling of a brook, or a crescendo of kettle drum-rolls and cymbal crashes as code for a violent battle scene. In less explicitly codified ways, other structural elements (tempo, timbre, etc.) are seen as interacting in such a way as to infuse the musical experience with more nebulous meanings; for example, a slow and regular procession of chords played in the low octave registers within the minor key is portrayed as representing sadness or melancholy. Naturally, the adoption of such a position brings with it further assumptions about what constitutes adequate listener competence<sup>15</sup>.

Academic discourse regarding the meaning of musical experience continues to rest upon a portrayal of the musical object as an empirical entity that is to be probed by the subject in order to reveal the underlying systems or coherence upon which its perception as meaningful rests. Thus within the broader social science literature, there remains the assumption that “music”, defined as a meaningful organisation of sound, is representative of wider sets of values, ideologies or structures of meaning (McClary 1991; Longhurst 1996). This approach is subject to two sustained criticisms. Firstly, conceiving of music exclusively “as text” completely ignores the realm of its use, or at

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<sup>14</sup> Naturally, since signifiers for the same mental notion differ between languages both the signifier and the signified are arbitrary (i.e., neither does the written nor spoken word “apple” have a necessary association with that particular fruit, nor would a semiotic system (language) which has no concept or experience of that fruit be likely to develop a word to signify it).

<sup>15</sup> In one of musicology’s seminal texts, Leonard B. Meyer’s (1956) *Emotion and Meaning in Music*, emotional response is related to what the music “implies” based on the listener’s adequate knowledge of its style.

best reduces it to a secondary moment of reception by a defined audience (see below). Secondly, the focus on texts presents a picture of culture as equivalent to little more than the communication of information; according to this reading, music becomes just another “thing” bound up in a wider concern with questions about how objects function to signify.

Post-structuralist and postmodern criticisms of the somewhat simplistic structuralism inherent in textual readings and their relationships to specific audiences provided the impetus for a move away from the music-as-text approach towards one bringing “interpretations” and “consumption” more to the fore (see Miller 1995). The argument here is that an exclusive focus on the “text” as it might be purported to quasi-objectively “mean” (given the web of social understandings greeting its reception), serves to occlude questions about how texts are selectively interpreted by their audiences. The “audience” might thus consist of either writers, artists and critical viewers (whose interpretive repertoires may seek to “see beyond” standard critiques) or members of subcultural groupings choosing to resist or subvert the meaning of texts (Jenkins 1992). An understanding of the way in which “interpretation” takes place is thereby seen, along with analyses of the way texts signify meaning, to be an important part of its functioning. The two main theoretical models supporting work of this sort are Stuart Hall’s (1980) influential encoding/decoding model, and the linked “circuit of consumption” approach developed by Richard Johnson (1986) both of which were subsequently used across a range of work on consumption during the 1990s. Taken together, Hall’s and Johnson’s approaches have been seen as of great value for attempts to understand the way music is infused with meanings by audiences and how these meanings are subsequently circulated. As Kong (1995) puts it:

Producers encode their preferred meanings in cultural forms (such as music). The resulting text is then read by an audience, in a manner sometimes concordant, at others discordant with the encoded meanings. These meanings are then incorporated into lived cultures and social relations; feedback loops may then provide material for the production of new texts or lead to a modification of existing ones. In other words meanings are transformed at each stage, reflecting the contexts of production and consumption, as well as factors such as gender, class, ethnicity and religion of those involved.

(Kong 1995: 188)

Within a framework where ‘meanings often diverge between producers and consumers, among different actors in the production process, and among different groups of consumers’ (Kong 1995: 188), multiple readings of musical meaning inevitably follow. Indeed, the way the literature has presented music’s interpretation and appropriation by various audiences clearly illustrates that it is seen as an almost paradigmatic form of consumption, in the sense in which this has been increasingly conceived of since the late 1970s – as an “active” interpretive act concerned with the production of an excess of meaning. In a review of the literature on consumption, Slater sums up the value of this perspective by noting how it ‘regards consumption as an active process of making and using meanings and objects, and the consumer as a subject active in the constitution of its own subjectivity and world’ (Slater 2002: 148). Similar sentiments are expressed within the work of Willis (1990) and Longhurst (1996) with regard to young people’s consumption of music and popular culture.

The foundation of this approach, popular as it is within the social sciences, is not without significant weaknesses however. While it may be of particular relevance and value in articulating the way some modern audiences reinscribe or reinterpret cultural texts (such as music) with new and alternative meanings, its principal flaw lies in the fact that it assumes actors to be first, foremost, and above all else, interpretive. This is an image supported within the meta-narrative of postmodernity which depicts consumers as invariably concerned with identity, signification and subjectivity (Shields 1992). Echoing one of the aforementioned problems attributed to overtly structuralist readings of cultural texts, this perspective, in turning the focus of its attention away from texts and towards consumers, now portrays the latter as concerned with little within culture beyond the communication of meaning. Thus ‘general, everyday media



use is identified with attentive and meaningful reading of specific texts' which, in the view of some commentators, 'is precisely what it is not' (Hermes 1995: 15). Although mediated texts undoubtedly *are* read, in numerous circumstances, with focus and attention, equally (if not more) often, actors attend to them with little in the way of sustained consideration or critical appreciation.

Perhaps more crucially however, in light of the aims of this project, there is another reason why both the structuralist and interpretive accounts of musical meaning appear to fall short of the mark. The principal reason for this is that neither of them offers a sustained account of the ways musical meaning might be derived through music making or musical activities of a sort other than listening. Essentially, in emphasising the meaningful elements of music which might be derived from its reading as a text or else as a form of consumption (albeit by consumers empowered to reinscribe given texts with alternative meanings) the picture presented still never gets beyond portraying musical subjects as relatively passive. This means that both approaches largely lack the conceptual tools necessary to provide much insight into the potential meanings of music as a form of action. Given the primary role of music making and music-related activity within community music activities, this situation would appear to downgrade the potentially meaningful elements of musical "doing" in an excessive way.

As shall be demonstrated below, it is at this point that the concept of *musical habitus* comes into its own. It does this in two ways: firstly, by providing a means through which we might think about the dimensions along which active musical creation and performance might serve to *mean* for actors – this is an area of musical meaning that goes largely untouched by music-as-text approaches and yet which can be of particular significance to young people's creative musical activity (Elliott 1995; Campbell 1998). Secondly, the concept of *musical habitus* also brings to the fore a consideration of the socio-cultural conditions of musical activity and its situated personal, religious, ceremonial or social uses. Before turning to these matters in greater depth however, it is first necessary to focus our attention on an as yet unconsidered dimension of music: the material, sonic properties of music as sound.

### 2.2.2 Music as Sound

As is mentioned above, one of the principal shortcomings of conceptualising music as primarily concerned with the communication of meaning, as a “text” of one sort or another, is that such an approach effectively overlooks any understanding of the physical matter of sound. As Revill (2000) stresses, while it is important to recognise ‘music as a distinctive mode of representation with a physicality and a history which cannot be divorced from an understanding of its cultural role in society’, we nevertheless need to be careful not to ‘lose track of sound’ (Revill 2000: 610).

Arguments about the “phenomenal properties of sound” draw on a number of theorists who have attempted to think through how the physical properties of sound are central to the construction of musical meaning and thus the presence of music within life (see, e.g., Shepherd & Wicke 1997). Taken to their extreme, arguments about the specific nature of music propose the absolute impossibility of understanding it through the conventions of any form of analysis designed to explain the signifying functions of language. The basis of this tradition, dating back as far as Plato, sees music as a pure sign which functions in a manner radically different to either written or spoken languages. Music’s special functioning is, in such instances, considered to depend on the fact that, unlike language, it cannot refer to, indicate or designate any “reality” outside of itself (Chanan 1995). In this way the ephemeral material qualities of sound are seen to make it a sign with “special” properties.

Music is more than an object of study: it is a way of perceiving the world. A tool of understanding.

(Attali 1985: 4)

One of the principal reasons for such a conceptualisation of music may well reside in the fact that sound has certain qualities not generally associated with the other phenomena that impinge on our senses. A focus on the specific temporal and physical properties of musical experience has led theorists to portray sound-music as a unique form of matter which interacts with our listening sense and from there with our other senses in complex ways. This account of listening is based on assumptions about the

“physiologically universal” effects of the material properties of music on the listener’s body (Shepherd 1991; Rodaway 1994).

Such an emphasis on the “universal” aspects of music is taken up by ethnomusicologist John Blacking in *Music, Culture and Experience* (1995). For Blacking, the physiologically universal aspects of musical “meaning” (although this not exactly the right term here one feels) relate to an ‘innate, species-specific set of cognitive and sensory capacities which human beings are predisposed to use for communication and making sense of their environment’ (Blacking 1995: 224). Blacking elaborates his thinking about the innate capacities associated with music listening and conceptualises them as a ‘primary modelling system’ within the ‘infrastructure of human life’ (Blacking 1995: 223). Combining his observations of musical systems in a range of cultural contexts with evolutionary facts which have seen musical activity continue as a feature of human life both prior to and after the emergence of verbal language some 70,000 years ago, Blacking’s claim is that human beings are predisposed to “musical” communication. Far from claiming that all modern musics are derived from this primitive mode of thought, or that it is limited in usage to the production of music, Blacking attributes one aspect of music’s functioning for human life at the level of what he terms a “biogrammar”, comparable to the innate linguistic faculties studied by Chomsky and others. This musical biogrammar, it is claimed, facilitates the apprehension of a cognitive resonance from music regardless of specific social experience. This much is suggested by the way in which it is possible for us to make some sense of musical systems from other cultures without necessarily having to learn all their codes, as we must do in order to understand a foreign language.

It is important to be clear about what Blacking is saying here: while humans’ deep-seated relationship with musical forms indicates ways in which ‘there can be supra-cultural cognitive resonance’ and how ‘there must be levels at which different composers, listeners, and musical systems use the same “musical” modes of thought’ (Blacking 1995: 239), such resonance can only be experienced in an eminently personal and private way. These resonances have little to do with the language of emotions as structural musicologists might assume, where music is assumed to reveal ‘the nature of

feelings with a detail and truth which language cannot approach' (Langer 1942: 191). For Blacking, such accounts fail to recognize not only how artistic conventions and emotional expressions vary from one culture to another, but also how the ways people learn to classify and use their emotions vary considerably across cultures<sup>16</sup>. Rather, he affirms that music does have specific properties which render it quite unique, and that, furthermore, the way in which this uniqueness is experienced by human beings occurs at a deep, almost pre-conscious level of meaning.

Blacking's propositions resonate with findings from scientific studies seeking to explore the relationship between the human organism and music at a physical, material and instinctual level. Neurologists have confirmed that music relies on inherent neurological responses that we all share (Peretz 2001) and basic physiological arousal (relating to stimulation of the autonomic nervous system) resulting from music listening is a further human universal. Certain, more easily observable phenomena have also been found to pertain widely in instances of music listening. 'Rhythmic entrainment' (Chapple 1970; Hall 1977; McNeill, 1995) for instance, describes the contagious effect of rhythm on individuals, evidenced through involuntary or subconscious physical movements produced in unison with the rhythm of music. Scientists have also proposed ways in which music's supposed expressive powers tap into innate human propensities to initiate and organise "pre-wired" vocal expressions (MacLean 1978; Ploog 1981, 1986). Thus aspects of modulations in human vocalisation could also serve to explain why the human infant appears to possess a biological preparedness that makes consonance more attractive than dissonance (Zentner & Kagan 1998). Based on these findings, interpretive perspectives which downgrade music to the status of little more than a bearer of linguistically communicable meaning can be seen to lack an adequate conceptualisation of the vital, materially significant component of musical experiences.

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<sup>16</sup> Claims supporting the cultural specificity of emotions have been posited in findings from studies by Clifford Geertz (1973) and later Michelle Rosaldo (1980, 1983, 1984). More recently, the work of Gerber (1985) and Wierzbicka (1999) has attempted to distinguish between the inner experience of subjective emotional states (which is potentially universal) and the conceptual systems by which the emotions are defined and classified. It is broadly agreed that the latter are culturally specific.

### 2.2.3 Musical Objects and Musical Subjects

A tree falls in the forest but there is no one around to hear it. Does it make a sound?

Zen Koan

This koan<sup>17</sup>, the original aim of which is to clear the mind of conscious thought, raises interesting philosophical questions about existence and perception – can any object be said to have existence independent of an experiencing subject? Some of the koan's efficacy also appears to reside in the particular puzzlement surrounding sound's immaterial nature. Amongst other things, it alerts us to the fact that it is very much easier for us to question the existence of the sound made by the fallen tree than of the existence of the (albeit imaginary) tree itself.

The aim of this preamble is neither to clear the reader's mind of all conscious thought nor to introduce a philosophical debate about perception and matter, related as it may be to the question at hand. More simply, my aim is to alert readers to a point largely ignored by the two approaches to music and its meaning already presented: a series of operations must be undertaken by the listening subject before music can be called music or be said to carry meaning.

The two approaches addressed above are symptomatic of the dominant western view of music which, basing its ontology on a Cartesian dualism that delimits the boundaries between the subjects and objects of knowledge, has unquestioningly portrayed and analysed music as an "object" quite apart from its perceiving subjects. This point is crucial: central to all issues of understanding and experience are assumptions (be they implicit or explicit), which define the subject's relationship to the object. It is the constitution of the musical object and the implied position of the analyst (subject) that establishes the basis for understanding musical meaning. The approaches taking music-as-sound-experience and music-as-interpretable-text not only fail to take each other into account adequately then, they also fall prey to a lack of awareness of their assumed

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<sup>17</sup> According to Zen philosophy, a koan is a formulation, presented in baffling language, which points to ultimate truth.

object-subject relationship. One of the major outcomes of the adoption of such a position is that music's relationship with the subject is never explored beyond the point of being a "special kind" of experience – it is rarely if ever examined as a dynamic interaction in *practice*, a thing which, through its *use*, comes to matter to people in different ways.

Bringing an anthropological perspective to the matter of musical experience, Judith Becker (2001) proposes that our musical listening practices are far more implicated in social and cultural activities (and their related webs of social meaning) than tends to be assumed in most studies on music conducted by Western scholars<sup>18</sup>. Becker borrows a term from sociologist Pierre Bourdieu in developing an argument for the existence of a *habitus of listening* from which each of us develops 'a tendency to behave in a certain way' apropos musical experience, and which, though appearing 'tacit, unexamined, seemingly completely "natural"' is in fact developed through our 'unconscious imitation of those who surround us and with whom we continually interact' (Becker 2001: 138). Becker describes the accumulation of listening habits and expectations as "unconscious" since they go largely unquestioned by actors: 'only when confronted with an alternate kind of listening are we likely to reflect upon our own conventionalised mode' (Becker 2001: 136). This unconscious predisposition to interpret musical experiences in particular ways, is further socially and culturally influenced by what she terms "scripts" of music and emotion (people's understandings of the way different musical subject positions are framed and open to use). Consider, for example the ways in which the scripts generally enacted by those attending a Schubert piano recital differ from those adopted by people attending a salsa concert; the conventions of the listening experience (such as degree of physical movement or level of interaction with other listeners generally invoked during performance, not to mention assumed notions of personhood and identity) imply distinctly different types of social and musical experiences.

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<sup>18</sup> Becker refers to such portrayals of musical listeners as 'silent, still...paying close attention to a piece of music' (2001: 135) – a deportment generally taken as the norm particularly in laboratory-based studies of musical affect.

Becker's use of the concept of habitus provides insight into its potential merits and also demonstrates how the processes involved in musical experience cast our interpretation of musical sounds, our emotional responses to them and the whole matrix of further social significances with which they are bound up into a web of deeply contextual and situated social practice. An appreciation of music as simultaneously imbued with social meanings and achieved through socially embedded practices undertaken *by actors* has led a number of commentators to suggest that greater emphasis ought be placed on music's active properties than has traditionally been the case. Indeed this has led music educator Christopher Small (1998) to encourage greater recognition of how music is an activity rather than a thing. Small coins the term "musicking" to reveal the multiple and sustained forms of action necessary to both enact music and, through this enactment, imbue it with a variety of meanings, many of which are based in relationships. Again by collapsing the false dichotomy between musical objects and musical subjects, more significant insights can be gleaned into the way music functions both socially and personally than are necessarily accessible through textual analyses. As we shall explore (see section 2.4), the concept of a *musical habitus*, in helping overcome the false opposition between objectivism and subjectivism whilst also proposing the importance of active, adaptive and generative action in sustaining musical meanings and the structures in which they are embedded, provides an appropriately insightful means of understanding how music and musical activity functions for individuals and groups.

Tia DeNora's work merits mention, at this juncture, for the way it delves further into listeners' subjective experiences of music and draws out the complexity of the relationships between musical subjects and objects. She stresses that a focus on 'music's specific properties' should occur in order to describe the mechanism by which 'music's materials provide resources that can be harnessed in and for imagination, awareness, consciousness, action, for all manner of social interaction' (DeNora 2000: 24). DeNora attempts to combine an understanding of the material "nature" of sound (as outlined in 2.2.2) with an analysis of the music-society connection. This leads her to conceive of the relationship between sound and subjectivity in terms of a "relational materialism" which begins from a commitment to include a broad consideration of objects and materials in our understanding of the manner by which individuals order their musical

experiences. Her questions about the composition of agency, and how a thing such as music acts, consequently become evolving investigations about how subject positions are ordered and organised by musical materials.

This approach sees DeNora carefully trace the multitude of ways in which music is bound to the elaboration of conduct in different contexts including, for example, the home, retail spaces, neo-natal classes and aerobics workouts. She stresses that music has a series of properties that thereafter ‘configure’ users and ‘prescribe’ behaviour, since ‘the object’s design is oriented to particular scenarios of use and users’ (DeNora 2000: 35). The focus for DeNora’s view of musical affect is therefore on ‘the ways in which the specific properties of material (or artefact) are accessed and implicated in some social or social psychological process’ (DeNora 2000: 35).

A significant aspect of the dispositions sought by DeNora’s respondents was their emotional import. Here music could be seen to function as an ordering device at the personal level, as a means of ‘creating, enhancing, sustaining or changing subjective, cognitive, bodily and self-conceptual states’ (DeNora 2001: 169). The concept of emotional work has been adopted more broadly within sociology in recent years. In this context emotion is conceived as a ‘bodily co-operation with an image, a thought, a memory – a co-operation of which the individual is aware’ (Hochschild 1979: 551, quoted in Williams 1996: 129). In accordance with these concerns, DeNora’s respondents described how they engaged in musical practices the aim of which were to:

regulate moods and energy levels, to enhance and maintain desired states of feeling and bodily energy (e.g. relaxation, excitement), and to diminish or modify undesirable emotional states (e.g. stress or fatigue).  
(DeNora 2001: 171).

An important term in such an analysis is that of “affordances”<sup>19</sup>. DeNora uses this term to describe how ‘artefacts may possess specific and sometimes obdurate qualities, that they may be active ingredients in the constitution of agency’ (DeNora 2000: 40). This alerts us to the ways music’s structures and sonic properties provide ways into different

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<sup>19</sup> This term is comparable to that of “objective possibilities” as used by Paul Willis’ (1974) in support of his homological approach to musical meaning.



modes of music appreciation and associated activity for listeners. According to DeNora, actors' decisions about these affordances were based on three types of factors; the first related to biographical and situational understandings of subjects; the second to their understandings of the emotional implications of conventional musical devices, genres, and styles; finally subjects reported consideration of the perceived parallels (articulations/homologies) between musical materials/processes and social or physical materials/processes. Clearly implicated in the way in which musical activities and practices could be said to *mean* then are the intentions and subject positions adopted by listeners towards them.

#### **2.2.4 Musical Meaning Revisited**

When considering musical meaning and the import of musical experiences, then, three interrelated factors come to the fore. Firstly, the symbolic and interpretive realm of socially held meaning are informative of not only how music's inherently sonic properties might be read, but also of the relation of sonic signifiers to the network of broader social activities to which they relate. It is through contextually given meanings that "sounds" correlate with class positions, gender identities, ethnicities and so on. Secondly, musical products can be seen to operate at a more intrinsically material level, here with regard to what has been termed their "special" properties – the action of sound, functioning "on" and "with" bodies in a plethora of different ways, establishes a biological and phenomenological basis for music's role in configuring aspects of physical and psychological experience. The final important component required in order to establish a complete picture of the ways in which music can *mean* is to overlay the first two elements of music with a fuller definition of the musical subject and of their "musicking" activities; the significance of this aspect of musical meaning resides in its questioning of the subject-object relationship assumed in musical experience by advocates of the first two perspectives. As such, it directs questions about musical meaning towards the dispositions of those subject to musical experience and implies a need to investigate empirical accounts of music's subjective *use* and the way it operates within the context of other social and cultural practices.

In what follows I would like to propose a fuller means of conceptualising this third and highly important aspect of musical experience and for considering ways in which it is constituted. In elaborating some of the central constitutive elements of the subject positions or dispositions which are adopted with regard to musical experience, I make use of Pierre Bourdieu's term *habitus*, inflecting it with specific relevance to the matter of subjectively adopted stances towards music. This approach reveals what I consider to be core elements in the formation of individual's dispositions towards music listening and music making and, as such, points towards some significant variations in types of musical experience.

## **2.3 Music and Habitus**

My aim in this section is twofold. Firstly I introduce Bourdieu's concept of *habitus* and the related concept of *field*. Seen by many anglophone commentators to be something of a mysterious entity since its initial formulation (c.f. Alexander 1995) – either under-specified and abstract, else overly-deterministic – it will be important to properly elucidate the nature of *habitus* and to explain the relevant theoretical work it accomplishes. My second task is to uncover the ways in which *habitus* and *field* might be most usefully applied to musical experience and musical materials – this will lead me to propose some of the principal constitutive elements of a *musical habitus* which I shall subsequently consider within the context of the broader cultural and social system implicated in *musical fields*.

### **2.3.1 The Bourdieuan Habitus**

The relevance of Bourdieu's concept of *habitus* to musical experience resides primarily in its ability to see beyond any false opposition between objectivism and subjectivism. For Bourdieu, structuralism fails to adequately account for the processes of social construction throughout the formation of which actors respond to social structuring elements in light of their social location. Thus it is in an attempt to restore a fuller account of the strategies employed by social actors embedded within social structures that the theory of *habitus* was developed. Bourdieu uses the term to describe the assemblage of dispositions, acquired largely in the early stages of life, which informs subjectivity and hence action (Bourdieu 1984: 112-114, 171; Bourdieu 1990: 30-65;

Bourdieu 1993). Habitus is effectively a mediator between social relations – class, ethnicity, gender, education and so on – and what people do: their “practice”. That said, it should not be seen strictly as a system of conditioning. For one thing it can adapt, albeit in a limited way, to new situations: ‘habitus is a principle of invention produced by history’ (Bourdieu 1993: 87).

Though a dense, exceedingly complex theoretical construct, at its root habitus (deriving from the Latin verb “habere” – to have) can be said to incorporate the basis of mental or cognitive structures through which individuals classify, evaluate and subsequently interact with the social world. Within the habitus, internalised schemes of perception and dispositions towards social classifications and social action are cumulatively formed over the course of individuals’ lives. Further, actors’ habitus both produce and are produced by the social world; they are at one and the same time *structuring structures* (insofar as they structure the social world) and *structured structures* (in that they are structured by the social world). This attempt to bring into synthesis the ‘dialectic of the internalisation of externality and the externalisation of internality’ (Bourdieu 1977: 72) is the fundamental component of the concept of habitus; it conjoins the subjective actor with objective social structures in a way that maintains the importance of both in the genesis of individual dispositions<sup>20</sup>, allowing for a recognition of the structuring effects of power while simultaneously retaining the conceptual space for indeterminacy on the part of subjects and granting that the consequences of structuring forces may well be unintentional.

It is worth distinguishing between several of the principle functions that, in his work, Bourdieu saw as integral to the habitus. The first of these is the *habitus-as-classifying-structure*. This classifying structure is made up of the practical knowledge of the social world that is presumed by social actors’ “reasonable” behaviour within it. Such classificatory schemes consist of:

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<sup>20</sup> Bourdieu’s use of the term “disposition” relates to the outcome, at any one point in time, of the operations of the *habitus* for individuals. That is, dependent upon the functioning of the *habitus*, social actors adopt particular attitudes towards social phenomena, are more or less “disposed” to certain kinds of activities and feel “naturally” inclined towards them or repelled by them. Dispositions thus generate practices as well as actors’ perceptions of them and their basis is always a function of social relations (such as in the case of distinctive “class dispositions”).

historical schemes of perception and appreciation which are the product of the objective division into classes (age groups, genders, social classes) and which function below the level of consciousness and discourse. Being the product of the incorporation of the fundamental structures of a society, these principles of division are common to all the agents of the society and make possible the production of a common, meaningful world, a common-sense world.

(Bourdieu 1979: 468)

This common-sense world, this map of social space, related as it is to historically constituted objective conditions whose existence is (albeit tacitly) recognised by all, is internalised by social actors over time. It is upon the basis of this “map” that subsequent actions are predominantly based. Despite the objective reality of this map of social relations, the way its import is responded to by individuals depends upon the social location from which it is perceived. Thus, for example, while a devotee of electronic dance music may easily perceive the differences between techno, house, drum and bass, trance and gabber – consequently categorising them accordingly – someone less familiar with dance music as a whole will be unlikely to perceive and categorise electronic dance music in the same way. Although the particular import of social categorisations and distinctions varies from different subject positions, the social reality from which they are read (e.g., the musical genre known as electronic dance music) is indisputably, the same one. The fundamental components of the classificatory schemes applied to the social world are a network of oppositions between such things as the high (sublime, elevated, pure) and low (vulgar, low, modest), the spiritual and the material, fine and coarse, free and forced, unique and common, and so on. Lying behind such oppositions are the fundamental oppositions that exist within the social order; these function across seemingly varied areas of practice and serve to distinguish society’s dominant from its dominated groups and individuals.

Based upon the functioning of this classifying structure is the functioning of the *habitus-as-evaluative-structure*. This second step in the operations of the habitus is the point at which actors’ classified knowledge of the map of social space is enacted as a system of judgement and evaluation. In other words, the habitus’ evaluative operations determine the different ways in which social actors apply this quasi-objective

classificatory structure to the different real-world situations with which they are faced. The make-up of this perceptual, evaluative structure, responding as it does to individuals' objective social positions and conditions, varies according to the functions it serves for specifically located and thus specifically interested social actors. For our dance music devotee then, her/his evaluations of different sub genres can be expected to correlate with the functions they each serve or fail to fulfil for her/him:

what individuals and groups invest in the particular meaning they give to common classificatory systems by the use they make of them is infinitely more than their 'interest' in the usual sense of the term; it is their whole social being, everything which defines their own idea of themselves, the primordial, tacit contract whereby they define 'us' as opposed to 'them', 'other people', and which is the basis of the exclusions ('not for the likes of us') and inclusions they perform...

(Bourdieu 1979: 478)

The manner in which the classifying and evaluative structures of the habitus function in consort consequently derives its efficacy firstly from the shared meanings inscribed in the social order (unconsciously internalised) and secondly, as a function of the particular social locations of interested actors. To a certain degree then, this implies that those actors who share an understanding of the meanings inscribed in the social order (i.e., who are members of the same social order) and who occupy similar social locations will be more likely to perceive, classify and evaluate social phenomena in broadly similar ways. As such, the schemes of the habitus,

engage the most fundamental principles of construction and evaluation of the social world, those which most directly express the division of labour (between, the classes, age groups and the sexes) or the division of the work of domination...

(Bourdieu 1979: 466)

Even in the field of taste distinction, a sphere generally considered to respond less to the logic of such principles than to the vagaries of subjective preference, and where the 'the sociologist finds himself in the area par excellence of the denial of the social' (Bourdieu 1979: 11), these principles are of no less relevance. The sense in which I use the term "taste" here recalls its application in Bourdieu's work *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste* (1979), in which he refers to it as:

a practical mastery of distributions which makes it possible to sense or intuit what is likely (or unlikely) to befall – and therefore to befit – an individual occupying a given position in social space.

(Bourdieu 1979: 466)

Taste here functions as a sort of social orientation, it provides individuals with a “sense of one’s place”, implies a practical anticipation of what the social meaning and value of a chosen practice or thing will probably be (given the distribution of actors in social space and the practical knowledge other agents have of the correspondence between goods and groups). As such, taste is actually ‘one dimension of a total relation to the world and to others, a life-style’ yet, echoing the unconsciousness of other operations of the habitus, one ‘in which the effects of particular conditions of existence are expressed in a “misrecognisable” way’ (Bourdieu 1979: 54). Bourdieu’s point here is not that individuals are unaware of their reasons for holding particular preferences about cultural artefacts, but rather that they fail to recognise the ways in which the objective conditions of their existence have served to structure the properties of their taste, including its most deeply held affinities and strongest rejections. Consider, for instance, how someone’s love of classical music, as fostered by their regular attendance at concerts as a child and reinforced through the piano lessons subsequently undertaken (both of which were paid for by that person’s parents), is rarely, if ever, recognised as being in any way a function of the material wealth of that person’s parents.

In addition to the habitus’ classificatory and evaluative functions, there is also the *habitus-as-action-generator*. Here the habitus is often mistakenly taken to be a stand-in for the individual or subjective consciousness, which is then faced with a macro-level structure composed of other individuals, institutions and organizations (King 2000). However, the significant appearance of ideas initially proposed by Piaget in Bourdieu’s conception of habitus as psychological (cognitive) structure (Piaget 1970a, 1970b) means that Bourdieu’s thinking diverges from the structuralist picture considerably. The key element of Piaget’s thought that Bourdieu incorporated into his theory of habitus concerns the primary emphasis placed not on cognitive structures as static symbolic representations, but on *bodily schemas* and the *operations* generated by way of these. When taken together, the notions of *bodily schemas* and *operations* posit that the

consequences of actor's classifications and evaluations of the external environment are encoded into bodily practices and that the generation of action in practice is regulated by a combination of mental *and* bodily dispositions.

Practical belief is not a "state of mind", still less a kind of arbitrary adherence to a set of instituted dogmas and doctrines ("beliefs"). but rather a state of the body.

(Bourdieu 1990: 68–69)

Bourdieu's emphasis on bodily dispositions, which might include consideration of people's ways of carrying themselves, of laughing, of eating, of using their bodies to demonstrate confidence, composure or anxiety, is of some relevance to this study, given the bodily engagements involved in musical experience (both its reception and performance). As such, it will be taken up further in consideration of my empirical findings. For now it is sufficient to recognise the fact that in conjunction with the cognitive, mental operations of classification, evaluation and subsequently interested action within the habitus, *bodily schemas* can be viewed as responding to a parallel logic inasmuch as they too are unconsciously embedded within the habitus' operations with the effect of inclining (or not) actors towards certain types of social action and interaction.

Bourdieu goes on to incorporate these fundamental ideas into his theory of *practice*. The term *practice* essentially refers to actors' real-world actions; as such practice acts, for Bourdieu, as the conceptual point of contact between the individual's habitus and the social world, between disposition and position – it is both within *practice* that the habitus is shaped, and through the habitus that practice generated. As a moment that incorporates both the acquisition as well as the activation of mental, cognitive systems as well as *bodily schemas* and *operations*, practice can be seen to challenge simple structural determinism; habitus does not obey explicit rules or laws. Nevertheless, habitus does still describe a tendency for a person to act in a regular manner, creating a basis from which to forecast their behaviour in specific circumstances. As an attempt to more explicitly conceptualise the functioning of an individual's "disposition", their "tendencies" or their "feel for the game" in a way that accounts for the interactions between multiple conceptions of social structure and the generative spontaneity of

human activity, the concept of habitus thus retains a certain indeterminacy or freedom at its core. For Bourdieu, actors are neither fools nor fully rational beings: rather they act in a “reasonable” manner that can be seen to obey a certain “logic of practice” (Bourdieu 1980/1990). This logic however, must incorporate that vagueness, the more-or-less, which define individuals’ practice and their ordinary relation to the world. Logic concerned with practice is thus:

‘polythetic’ – that is to say that practical logic [or a logic of practice] is capable of sustaining simultaneously a multiplicity of confused and logically (in terms of formal logic) contradictory meanings or theses because the over-riding context of its operation is practical.

(Robbins 1991: 112)

Bourdieu’s concept of *field* is a further building block of his theory of society that is relevant to the present discussion. Essentially, field refers to a sphere of social activity that can be considered distinct from others on the grounds of the different forms of power (capital) that circulate within them. With the idea of “capital” (borrowed from the economic sphere), Bourdieu sought to present an idea of the different forms of power at people’s disposal<sup>21</sup>. The main function of the concept of field is to represent the *structure* of some part of society. The functioning of fields comes to be understood by individuals the greater these spheres of activity are exposed to the classificatory and evaluative functions of the social agent’s habitus. There exist a huge variety of fields in society, according to Bourdieu, such as the fields of art, photography, literature, the economy, an industry, a firm, and so on (e.g. Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992: 94-115). Clearly, we might also consider music in terms of a field. The structural properties of a field are primarily important insofar as they assign specific locations to actors, locations which are defined in terms of the relations of difference between them; hence the field can be said to exert pressure on actors to remain in his or her position.

A metaphor often used by Bourdieu in relation to the field is that of a game. Each field, like a game, is only possible given players who “know-how” to play and who are.

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<sup>21</sup> The four forms of “capital” usually discussed by Bourdieu include *economic capital*, the power of finance, *social capital*, which consists of varied social relations between people, *symbolic capital*, stemming from actors’ honour and prestige and *cultural capital* which involves various kinds of legitimate knowledge (which is produced according to criteria established within a field and, therefore, according to those who define and dominate a field).



indeed, inclined to play. Furthermore, the game and its stakes must be understood as the relationship of players on the field and their varying abilities to play the game (“feel for the game”). Since each field is centred around a specific interest, with the actors in a field all basically pursuing the same interest – be it prestige and renown in the field of art, share of the market in an industry or personal power in a firm – the field remains in a constant state of flux as players struggle for command of it.

Further, an individual’s relationship to a field, bound up as it is with their know-how, their bodily schemas and their “feel for the game” can be said to depend, to a large degree, upon factors relating to their primary socialisation. Bourdieu writes of this in terms of individuals having an almost ‘native membership’ of particular fields (Bourdieu 1990: 67). It is at this point that the metaphor of the game breaks down somewhat; while games are generally seen for exactly what they are – arbitrary and artificial social constructs underpinned by specific rules with which individuals enter into a quasi-contractual arrangement in their agreement to play – social fields are characterised more by a slow and gradual augmentation of their autonomy.

one does not embark on the game by a conscious act. one is born into the game, with the game; and the relation of investment, *illusio*, investment, is made more total and unconditional by the fact that it is unaware of what it is.

(Bourdieu 1990: 67)

Hence the more an individual develops practical mastery over and invests commitment in a particular game (and its outcomes) the more ‘everything that takes place in it seems sensible: full of sense and objectively directed in a judicious direction’ (Bourdieu 1990: 66). This is *illusio*; commitment to, belief in, the presuppositions of a field. Such presuppositions themselves Bourdieu terms *doxa*. For an individual to be able to consider him/herself, or indeed for others to consider them as related to any particular field (such as music), that individual must be seen to exhibit a “practical faith” in the *doxa* of that field:

the condition of entry that every field tacitly imposes, not only by sanctioning and debarring those who would destroy the game. but by so arranging things, in practice, that the operations of selecting and shaping new entrants (rites of passage, examinations, etc.) are such as to obtain from them that undisputed, pre-reflexive, naïve, native compliance with the fundamental presuppositions of the *field*...

(Bourdieu 1990: 68)

To give an example, a violinist hoping to play in a classical orchestra as a career, the “conditions of entry” of which Bourdieu makes mention would typically include many years of instrument learning. In this, one such “presupposition of the *field*” to which players must offer an “undisputed, pre-reflective, naïve, native compliance” is in respect of the assumed “greatness” of the “great” composers and in a willingness to suppress their own musically creative urges in favour of the hierarchy imposed by the arrangement of the classical orchestra (with the composer, albeit usually *in absentia*, at the top, followed by the conductor and next, the orchestral players).

The usefulness of the concept of field lies in the fact that, in specifying a number of general laws that all fields can be said to obey, and pointing up how they relate to individuals’ habitus, it provides the tools for thinking about the complex mechanisms motivating and inhibiting various forms of social action. This is true irrespective of the substantive content of the form of capital that is seen as being of value within specific fields by the actors engaged in them. Indeed, ‘a capital does not exist and function except in relation to a *field*’ (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992: 101). Capital is thus, very simply, whatever has an effect within a field, whatever produces outcomes or consequences.

## **2.4 The *Musical Habitus***

There are a number of features of Bourdieu’s concepts of habitus and field that render them particularly applicable to instances of musical experience. Essentially, they provide ways of thinking about actors’ responses to and engagement with musical practices. For instance, one fundamental component of habitus relates to its inherent indeterminacy; the concept affords room for the sometimes serendipitous and unexpected outcomes of engagements with music while still never quite allowing them to drift completely beyond the limits of reasonable expectation. In this way, the quasi-

unpredictability of individuals' musical preferences, which, like the habitus 'cannot be explained either by the extrinsic, instantaneous determinisms of mechanistic sociologism or by the purely internal but equally instantaneous determination of spontaneist subjectivism' (Bourdieu 1990: 54) and whose underlying grounds (social aesthetics) are indeed largely unknown to actors themselves, can, through the application of the concept of habitus be seen to nevertheless obey a certain logic of practice (i.e., the logic of Bourdieu's social theory of taste). The middle-class teenager who develops a fascination for piercings, jack boots and the music of Marilyn Manson, while perhaps imagining themselves to be asserting individuality and rejecting conformity, is, in one sense, following a well-trodden path in seeking to use "the devil's music" as a means of distinguishing themselves from older generations and principally, their parents. In fact, given such purposes, their use and choice of such a musical form is quasi-predictable or at least understandable.

Further, since the concept of habitus affords the experiences of bodies a fundamental conceptual significance in both the generation and acquisition of schemes of perception, thought and action, it is capable of providing an account of the way music's material qualities embody structures-in-habitus (that is, an affinity for the sonically codified "gentle" and "sensuous", or else a negative valuation of such properties). At the same time, to the extent that actors possess knowledge and experience of differing fields of musical activity, they never lose sight of the objective structures implied by different musical forms; as carried away as one might become by the music produced by a classical orchestra, at a fundamental level there is no getting away from the values and beliefs inscribed in, and ascribed to, such a form of musical performance (i.e., control before spontaneity, listeners as largely silent and passive, a commitment and obedience to a hierarchically organised musical group structure as opposed to the looser, more improvised approach of, say, free jazz musicians). Provided they are familiar with them, the doxa of musical forms will thus recall to actors the various strategies and practical activities inscribed in them.

Yet that aspect of the concept of habitus which is perhaps most relevant to the matter of musical experience resides in its portrayal of the acquisition and subsequent deployment

of strategies of evaluation, selection and action as exemplified in Bourdieu's analysis of distinction and taste. The bases of these strategies lie in a slowly accumulated dispositional mental and bodily state, the fullest appreciation of which asks us to take account of experiences gained in instances beyond those of a purely cultural or musical nature. That is, factors whose origins lie in a range of diverse domains of experience will serve to influence the whole of an individual's habitus (including the *musical habitus*), and as such will be seen to always play a part in the uptake of practices. Also, the degree to which an actor's strategies can be expected to vary across contexts will be a function of the different nature of the field of activity implicated. What these two points imply is that to differentiate between various *musical habitus*, we need to understand some of the principal factors serving in its formation and generation. Furthermore, this formation must be seen in relation to actors' conceptualisations of the musical field and its relevant sub-fields.

#### **2.4.1 Formation Processes of the *Musical Habitus***

In *The Logic of Practice*, Bourdieu tells us that in the formation of habitus:

responses are first defined, without any calculation, in relation to objective potentialities, immediately inscribed in the present, things to do or not to do, things to say or not to say.

(Bourdieu 1990: 53)

Incorporated practices, recursive experience and unquestioned acts of habit appear to be the factors given primacy by Bourdieu concerning the matter of the processes of habitus formation. Two processes are at work here in fact; the first is practical mimesis. This term implies an overall relation of identification. By way of definition, it can be usefully seen in contrast to something like imitation, which presupposes a conscious effort to reproduce a gesture, an utterance or an object explicitly constituted as a model. Mimesis is thus less conscious, more unquestioned and seemingly "natural" ("the done thing"). The second process is reproduction: the practical reactivation, opposed to both memory and knowledge, of a disposition or stance towards an object. Importantly, both of these processes, by which elements of the habitus are cognitively incorporated and subsequently performed, tend 'to take place below the level of consciousness, expression and the reflexive distance which these presuppose' (Bourdieu 1990: 73).

Both practical mimesis and reproduction are common social mechanisms, cutting across numerous arenas of society.

When set in relation to particular fields, the operations of the habitus subsequently function in ways strongly guided by the structural considerations of the “practical world”:

The practical world that is constituted in the relationship with the habitus, acting as a system of cognitive and motivating structures, [acts] as a world of already realised ends – procedures to follow, paths to take...

(Bourdieu 1990: 53)

Thus ‘the regularities inherent’ in actors’ cultural conditions ‘tend to appear as necessary, even natural’ (Bourdieu 1990: 53). They serve to ‘generate dispositions objectively compatible with these conditions and in a sense pre-adapted to their demands’ (Bourdieu 1990: 54). The result of such “necessity” is to delimit the range and nature of practices (such as listening to or producing particular styles of music) which actors view as available to them:

The most improbable practices are therefore excluded, as unthinkable, by a kind of immediate submission to order that inclines agents to make a virtue of necessity, that is, to refuse what is anyway denied and to will the inevitable.

(Bourdieu 1990: 54)

In *Distinction* (1979) Bourdieu illustrates how this situation comes to be played out in the way that, for example, different class factions view art, music, cuisine, literature and a plethora of other, taste-dictated artefacts. The fact that ‘limits [of action] are set by the historically and socially situated conditions of its production’ (Bourdieu 1979: 73) which hence lead actors to ‘exclude all “extravagances” (“not for the likes of us”)’ (Bourdieu 1979: 55) forces us to turn attention to the socially situated conditions within which habitus formation takes place. Given the degree of internal circuiting functioning in the generation of habitus, it will come as no surprise that Bourdieu sees early childhood as being of significant influence in what follows it:

Unlike scientific estimations, which are corrected after each experiment according to rigorous rules of calculation, the anticipations of the habitus, practical hypotheses based on past experience, give disproportionate weight to early experiences.

(Bourdieu 1979: 54)

This turns our attention to the need to recognise the importance of immediate material realities and the “natural” or “naturalised” responses to which they give rise.

#### **2.4.2 Primary Musical Socialisation**

When Bourdieu is at his most transparent about the sources of habitus he notes the particular significance of the domain of experience he refers to as “primary socialisation”. Along with the material conditions of existence, Bourdieu stresses the importance of primary relational experiences, the practice of structured actions, objects, spaces and times, and the effects of biological necessity (1990: 79). Primary musical socialisation might correspondingly be said to engage, in addition to all of the conditions affecting the Bourdieuan habitus (which forms the underlying sub-strata of an explicitly *musical habitus*), factors such as the (relative) presence/absence of musical sounds in the home, the regularity of their use and the way(s) in which they are used, their material nature (volume, timbre, tempo, etc.) and sources (for example, hi-fi speakers, Walkman headphones, television, musical instrument or human voice), as well as the types of relational interactions incorporated into them (e.g., child-child(ren) and child-adult(s) interactions).

When the child grows up in a household in which music is not only listened to (on hi-fi or radio nowadays) but also performed (the ‘musical mother’ of bourgeois autobiography) and a fortiori when the child is introduced at an early age to a ‘noble’ instrument – especially the piano – the effect is at least to produce a more familiar relationship to music, which differs from the always somewhat distant...relation of those who have come to music through concerts or even through records.

(Bourdieu 1979: 75)

In addition, we might also consider the influence of the physical nature of the spaces within which musical experiences take place and the familiarity of these (home, street, school, community centre, concert hall, etc.) the times of day at which they occur, the

nature and amount of physical movement involved, the associated actions/practices of the musical encounter (and thus their socially given meanings) as well as the types of emotion expressed by other listeners (subsequently seen as “belonging” to the music). Take the early musical socialisation of Mozart for example. Irrespective of the child’s innate ability, is it possible to imagine that the norms and significance accorded to musical performance as it was undertaken in that household, one suffused by the music of his father, one of Europe’s leading musical teachers, did not impress themselves upon the infant? Might not the fact that music played a central part in the life of the home, was attended to with earnest attention and was seen as a source of livelihood by the family have already accorded it a central place in the child’s life? By means of contrast, where a child is socialised within an environment where significant others undertake no musical activities, show little interest in music, rarely play music in the home, and where little “live” music making is witnessed by a child, it would appear safe to assume that the developing child’s relationship to music will, in discernable ways, be correspondingly distant.

By the above rationale, those influences which we can consider as already significant upon the child’s growing conception of music’s role, function and the types of action which “naturally” accompany it, will depend considerably upon the attitudes embraced by significant others, their use of and facility/ease with musical products as well as matters relating to musical material conditions and their exploitation<sup>22</sup>:

Differences linked to social origin are no doubt most marked in personal production of visual art or the playing of a musical instrument, aptitudes which, both in their acquisition and in their performance, presuppose not only dispositions associated with long establishment in the world of art and culture but also economic means (especially in the case of piano-playing) and spare time. At equal educational levels, they vary strongly by social origin.

(Bourdieu 1979: 75)

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<sup>22</sup> Thus questions about whether the primary musical socialisation of a child involves instances where musical sounds are actively, physically played with, as contrasted with them simply being turned on and off, might already be seen as providing one of the bases upon which variously developed *musical habitus* rest.

Just as primary socialisation can thus be considered crucial in its effects upon the developing habitus, so the musical components of this process, primary musical socialisation, can be expected to play a key role in the development of actors' *musical habitus*.

### **2.4.3 Education and *Musical Habitus***

It is clear from Bourdieu's work concerning education that he sees it as a field where the habitus comes into sustained contact with the broader social structure and the material, symbolic and cultural values of society's dominant groups and classes. Education is the major source of our practical mastery of the patterns of culture, the means by which we break the code required to read and make sense of cultural products. In its role as a socialising process, education produces individuals capable of recognising the dispositions demanded by certain objects (such that objects can be "properly" understood). It is also capable of producing individuals endowed with an adequate disposition to approach certain objects (and hence understand them properly).

Bourdieu sees systems of education as amplifying relative social advantage and disadvantage through status-allocating activities (such as the attainment of certificates and qualifications) which channel and sort students according to their cultural habits and dispositions. This sorting occurs in a way that is temporally inseparable from the generation of dispositions which takes place within the education system, such that students come to both be classified and to classify themselves in the terms of the education system. At each stage of the academic endeavour, students are affirmed or rejected, their aspirations and self-esteem subtly manipulated, by being directed 'towards prestigious or devalued positions implying or excluding legitimate practice' (Bourdieu 1984: 25). As Bourdieu sees it, as a consequence of the structuring of students' experiences through the education system, it becomes possible to predict relationships between choices of media material (such as music) and degree or type of education. Since peripatetic, private, in-school music tuition and CM activity can be considered elements of actors' "musical" education, the import of these for the development of individuals' *musical habitus* needs to be recognised and fed into any analysis.



That said, it is at this point that, qua singular field, the label “music” can be seen to break down and require greater specification. In short, the historical and objective structure of the field of music cannot be said to adhere to the same kind of logic as might be applicable to more strictly academic disciplines such as physics or geography. As well as being something introduced and taught to pupils in school, music also has a life of its own outside of the education system. What this situation effectively implies is a need to be more specific about the nature of the musical field. With this in mind, it will suffice to recognise a simple formal distinction: on the one hand, there exist musical forms which can be considered “legitimate” (such as – in the case of most British schools – classical music, folk/traditional including some ethnic/world music forms, jazz, popular song and some mainstream pop music) and those that can be considered “illegitimate” or “disvalued” (including forms of hard rock and heavy metal, techno/rave and most other dance music forms, most hip-hop/rap, etc.). Such a hierarchy of legitimacy is implicitly encoded into educational music discourses and practices (through certification, grading and material-structural support systems such as in-school and peripatetic teaching provision) and is at the same time symptomatic of the range of other such hierarchies as they function across “the arts” more broadly. At the national level, for example, such a hierarchy of legitimacy plays a powerful role in much British cultural policy (McGuigan 1996; Miller & Yudice 2002).

Nor is such a distinction in any way an abstraction from the way such matters are apprehended by adolescent pupils themselves. Keith Roe (1983, 1987, 1992, 1995) has convincingly illustrated how “commitment to school” is a particularly useful explanatory variable when correlated with adolescent music preferences. In these studies, Roe shows how students with a negative commitment to school generally express a preference for socially-disvalued forms of music (expressive of an anti-authoritarian outlook more generally), while positive school commitment is demonstrated by students with a taste for more “acceptable” or legitimate musical forms (including those taught within schools). Students’ habitus, as developed both prior to and during educational experiences, might thus be said to lead them to adopt specific stances with regard to the musical materials presented within educational contexts.

Since “the school” and “music-in-school” are mutually dependent for their most complete substantive definitions, the furthest we can take our assumptions here is to say that the structuring of individuals’ musical dispositions occurs by virtue of some combination of the educational context itself and the musical practices undertaken therein (see, e.g., Sloboda 2001; Stalhammer 2003). Roe’s findings would nevertheless appear to suggest that the development of participatory CM projects allied to, or based within, school contexts (a common phenomenon) will likely appeal mostly to school-committed young people.

It might also be noted how Roe’s use of the variable of “school commitment” accords with the theorisations of subculturalists, who explain some youth subcultures’ tendency to affiliate with socially-disvalued forms of media as a response to their powerlessness and marginality to the broader social order (Willis 1978; Brake 1980). Thus subculture members’ activities and associations are said to have a “problem solving” function; the transference of loyalties away from the more validated cultural artefacts appreciated by school-committed students is thus here theorised as a reasonable response to feelings of educational marginalization. In the case of students for whom no such rejection of school-associated musical materials occurs, there exist (at least in theory) opportunities for school-musical practices to develop and for the *musical habitus* to be exposed to other aspects of this field in a more sustained way.

The interactions between the habitus and the educational system, as an objectively structured field to which almost all young people are exposed, is thus a crucial aspect of the formation of the *musical habitus*. It is particularly salient to issues concerning the acquisition of musical qualifications and for instilling in young people a sense of ease (“naturalness” and all else that this implies: confidence in understanding the field’s doxa, acceptance of its *illusio*, etc.) with certain musical materials. This is only a partial picture of the part played by music in young people’s lives however. In order to appreciate alternative configurations of *musical habitus* it is necessary to look beyond the education system and examine those other aspects of musical activity seen as significant by young people. This will imply adopting a perspective that sees musical activity in conjunction with other aspects of adolescent lives.

#### **2.4.4 Adolescence and *Musical habitus***

In this section I would like to consider the distinctive features of the relationship between adolescence and music. The nature of this relationship has already been discussed at length by a number of scholars (see, e.g., Ross & Rose 1994; Fornas 1995; Bennett 2000), many of whom have been keen to focus upon the importance of the role played by music and music-related activity in adolescent lives. Rather than rehearse the many arguments raised by these authors, my aim in what follows is to simply highlight those aspects of youth culture and youthful lives which might be considered as impacting most crucially upon young people's relationships to music and in particular, their music making activity.

In adolescence music tends to assume a somewhat different role for young people to that of earlier years; it is a time of life when attitudes towards music can undergo a considerable shift. In terms of music playing, it is interesting to recognise Sloboda's (2001) point about how the number of students undertaking musical instrument tuition falls off dramatically at this time of life. There are a number of factors at work here. The transition to secondary school is certainly one; instruments can come to be seen as "less important" than academic subjects, the peer groups through which instrumental activities were reinforced have been disrupted and secondary music teachers are (for structural and cultural reasons) less able than their primary colleagues to maintain a shared set of values and expectations (Sloboda 2001).

Additionally, this time of life significantly sees the onset of puberty (Erikson 1950, 1968, 1974), exposure to a range of different socio-cultural circumstances and the challenging of parental authority. Furthermore, adolescence typically sees young people beginning to test out viable identities as they strive to make a successful transition from childhood to adulthood (Cotterell 1996). One result of this is that the way young people are perceived of by others reaches new levels of significance for them at this time and their use of cultural resources, such as music, often becomes increasingly central to their attempts to build peer group relations and be "popular" with others. In such instances, an important aspect of young people's growing interest in cultural resources concerns their consumption of them, particularly music and associated consumables. Amongst

these we can count the technologies associated with music listening (such as stereos, MP3 players, record decks) as well as music playing (instruments, amplifiers, samplers, mixers and so on), attendance at music events of various kinds, clothing and other image-related or style resources (such as make-up, hairstyle, jewellery, tattoos, skateboards, and so on) not to mention other media forms including film, TV, computer and internet along with books and magazines.

In terms of considering its role in the formation of *musical habitus*, a first point to note concerns the importance attached to consumption by many young people today:

Consumer styles and artefacts [have] come to be perceived as an integral part of [young people's] identity.

(Jones and Wallace 1992: 119)

Some commentators have portrayed young consumers as not so much *inclined* to conspicuous consumption as, having been subjected to 'ever more aggressive and sophisticated marketing techniques' (Miles 1997: 59), leaving them constrained in a 'neon cage' (Langman 1992). For clues about how the consumption of music (and the variety of lifestyles associated with it) interact with the *musical habitus*, it is worth recalling Bourdieu's statement about the way cultural conditions 'generate dispositions objectively compatible with these conditions and in a sense pre-adapted to their demands' hence serving to 'make a virtue of necessity' (Bourdieu 1990: 54). At a basic material level then, young people will incline towards the musico-cultural positions available to them as consumers; a factor largely dependent upon the material-financial resources at their disposal.

In 21<sup>st</sup> century British youth culture, that there exist 'more alternatives than ever' (Reimer 1994: 139) in terms of youth cultural styles cannot be disputed. Yet despite the amount of alternatives available, these styles, it has been contended, do little more than 'highlight...similarity rather than difference' (Furlong and Cartmel 1997: 62). Indeed, some commentators have noted that for many young people today, dazzled by the 'illusory and fleeting' identities available in the youth marketplace (Cote and Allahar 1996: xvii) 'street cred' is actually derived by 'conforming to dominant fashions rather

than being an expression of individuality' (Furlong and Cartmel 1997: 62). As a consequence of such a 'lopsided insistence on buying, getting, having', financially disadvantaged youth can expect to find themselves in the grasp of 'a subtle and less readily discernable bondage' (Seabrook 1983: 8).

Since adolescent music preferences tend to be strongly bound up with other modes of consumption, we should therefore recognise the potential of spending power and opportunities for consumption in, to use Bourdieuan language, *structuring* the musical 'procedures to follow' and the 'paths' that actors' tastes lead them to pursue (Bourdieu 1990: 53). What this situation implies is that those young people without the spending power to sustain valued cultural identities, often viewed by more fortunate peers as 'weak-willed and unable to exploit their freedom' (Tomlinson 1990: 13), will be more inclined towards the objective cultural "necessities" available to them. The effects of this may well be evident in terms of not only the musical genres and social-structurally co-ordinated musical "worlds" to which young people are most disposed, but also in the closely related decisions concerning the uptake of music playing and learning activities, such as CM participation.

#### **2.4.5 Musical Ties**

Music does not come in neatly packaged parcels; it refuses to restrict its influence to easily delimited fields of activity. When experienced within contexts of familiarity, it spills out socially symbolic meaning in many directions, only some of which may form the focus of listeners' intentions. A further way in which music can be seen to *structure* and be *structured* by the workings of the habitus relates to the nature of the social and personal relationships and bonds that different musical forms and musical activities imply. A crucial consideration then, for the concept of *musical habitus*, involves the ways in which music and music-related activity plays a part in establishing, sustaining or rupturing actors' relationships. One means of thinking about these relationships is in terms of a "musical tie". This term refers to the real-world social interactions and friendships resulting from, as well as informing actors' musical experiences; the significant social networks and peer groupings implicated in specific forms of musical activity and interest. As has been persuasively argued (Frith 1985; Finnegan 1989;

Blacking 1995; Small 1998; North & Hargreaves 1999; Becker 2001) the social relations involved in musical activity are significant aspects of practically all forms of musical activity and can serve to influence many other aspects of actors' lives than those concerned directly with music. The matter of musical ties, musical communities and group musical identifications are of particular salience within the context of this study precisely because during adolescence, young people's interpersonal focus shifts away from the home and family towards increasing assertions of autonomy and identification with peer groups and life outside the home.

Adolescent peer group memberships and their relationships with musical materials have been the subject of work carried out by subcultural theorists (see, e.g., Hebdige 1979; Willis 1990). Here music is portrayed as playing an important role in structuring group activities (such as significant rituals) and in allowing in-groups to distinguish themselves from out-groups through its use as a label or "badge" of identification (Frith 1981). In light of music's use as a badge, it has been proposed that such symbolic statements might be seen as conveyors of "meta-information" about listeners. Empirical findings appear to provide support to such propositions: in a study by North and Hargreaves (1999), adolescent participants were shown to hold normative expectations about the characteristics of fans of different musical styles, and their personal evaluations of these fans varied according to their expectations<sup>23</sup>. Looking more closely at the way social evaluations concerning musical preference interact with other peer-group variables, Tarrant et al. (2001a) found correlations between positive and negative musical discriminations and levels of self-esteem<sup>24</sup>. In a subsequent study, (Tarrant et al. 2001b), music was found to be a powerful factor in the generation of negative perceptions of others when placed alongside other adolescent items of interest (e.g., "wearing fashionable clothes", "being good at football", "being popular with others", "being fun"). In another study, O'Neill and Boulton (1996) found that perceived

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<sup>23</sup> Here, participants perceived fans of pop music more positively than those expressing a preference for country and western music, classical music and "ballet music". Participants also perceived a number of other likely social consequences (e.g. having fewer friends) of being a fan of particular musical styles.

<sup>24</sup> The data here suggested that when specific musically aligned in-groups exhibited lower levels of self-esteem, they were more likely to distance themselves from out-groups in terms of their stated degree of liking for negatively stereotyped styles of music (i.e., they said that out-group members liked it *more* and they liked it *less*).

violations of gender boundaries in adolescence led to a significant loss of popularity: given the heavily gendered understandings which young people have been shown to hold of musical activity and musical instruments (Abeles & Porter 1978; Griswold & Chroback 1981; Delzell & Leppla 1992; Harrison & O'Neill 2000) the effects of gender relations must also be taken seriously.

Clearly then, adolescent musical preferences are implicated in socially based evaluations both of selves and other adolescents; these evaluations have been shown to provide one of the guiding bases for actors' decisions about social action and social relations. To take this relationship seriously and to seek an understanding of its functioning for young people with respect to music, requires an explanation of how allegiances to differing musical forms, peer groups and broader youth cultural trends imply differing sorts of social relations. This is, after all, the kind of discriminatory work carried out by young people themselves (including Tarrant's participants in the above studies). This task calls for an understanding of the relationships between specific sub-fields of musical activity and the habitus of those engaged in them.

In her study of music-making in an English town, Ruth Finnegan (1989) stipulates several useful ways of differentiating between the types of attachment people have with music. One of these she posits as existing along the lines of continuity and delimitation; i.e., between musical experiences which might be considered to fit in, in a continuous way, with a person's other social ties (think, for example of a style of music enjoyed by a whole family, or a local tradition of brass band membership), and those which people use to differentiate themselves from their families or community (the working class opera buff, the middle-class teenage death metal fan). Another such dimension concerns the degree to which a musical life involves significant rituals. Ultimately, Finnegan portrays musical activity's relative importance in defining actors' social identity, in determining their friendships, in forming their sense of self as varying from individual to individual and across genre, yet it is her grounds for distinguishing between different types of musical involvement that are perhaps most instructive. The usual sociological approach, which seeks to find how individuals' social conditions are reflected in their

musical activity, is here upturned; we are encouraged to instead consider how actors' use of music and their involvement in musical practices *inform* their social situations.

Taking Finnegan's basic premise on board, a number of further potential effects of musical activities upon individuals' and groups' social situations emerge. For instance, we might consider the ways in which the substantive values inscribed into certain musical activities (e.g., their purposes, about artist-listener and listener-listener power relations, about local/religious/class/ethnic/gender values, about ideology/politics, etc.) influence the personal and social lives of those involved. Also of interest is the relationship between musical ties and the nature of the experiences individuals can access through them (mental/physical, public/private, pious/hedonistic, calming/exciting, etc.). We might also ask about the symbolic functions they fulfil (fantasy/reality, associative/representational) and the emotional (love/passion, hate/anger, memory/hope) and bodily (smooth/awkward, towards/away, fast/slow, gentle/rough) affordances inscribed in them.

Naturally, an attempt to account for these factors and their import for different groups and individuals requires more than any simple empirical engagement can easily reveal – although this is a necessary element. The actors concerned may be unable to elucidate the precise appeal of specific sorts of musico-social experiences for them. What can usefully supplement empirical investigation, however, is a theoretical perspective whose breadth of vision is wide enough to take account of the structured and structuring elements of musical experiences and the ways in which variously structured and structuring habitus interact with them in the context of specific musical fields (and hence the broader social-structural contexts with which these are implicated).

To give an example here, consider the degree of difference (across some of the above dimensions) between the musical experiences of a long-time ceilidh dancer/folk fan and those of an adolescent techno listener and part-time DJ. The differing sorts of social relations enacted in instances of these two musical forms' social reception (let's assume these are ceilidh and techno club respectively) depend upon the substantive values associated with each musical form. These values will inform social encounters by



stipulating what sorts of things participants will typically consider as relevant to their activity within these musical fields. Thus placing value on an idea such as that of maintaining traditions might be a quasi-prerequisite for our ceilidh dancer and might consequently be seen to play a role in the structuring of these musical proceedings. For our techno fan however, issues surrounding tradition or “newness” may register in some regard, yet be less relevant a concern than the search for the “right” atmosphere or the pursuit of intense states of awareness (see, e.g., Diehl 2000). Thus even where musico-social activities can be said to share sets of similarly-codified concerns (which are often a function of the activities themselves), such as, for example, “enjoyment of dancing to the music”, the only way in which these might be compared, in the case of our ceilidh dancer and techno fan, implies largely ignoring the divergent, rich and possibly even contradictory forces motivating actors to engage in them in the first place.

Whether we’re talking about Finnish dance halls in Sweden, Irish pubs in London, or Indian film music in Trinidad, we’re dealing...not just with a commitment to ‘different’ songs, but also with an experience of alternative modes of social interaction. Communal values can only thus be grasped, as musical aesthetics *in action*.

(Frith 1996: 124)

I do not deny that at one level of analysis all musico-social activities may be said to share enough properties to render them open to certain sorts of comparison. What I would dispute however, is that the intentions brought to the activity, the bases of expression involved in their enactment, the sorts of thoughts/recollections/aspirations occupying the folk and techno fans’ minds as they listen, feel, think and move in relation to the music, the environment and the people therein, will differ so greatly in their substantive origins as well as their likely conclusions as to brook only limited comparison. In essence, my point is that musico-socially engaged actors usually have motivations and purposes; these can be of quite divergent origins and lead onto incommensurable outcomes. To comprehend the real significance of such forms of social action, we must grapple not only with the larger contextual wholes of individuals’ lives (the grounds of the habitus) but also their understandings of the import of their actions (for themselves and others) within the musical field with which they are involved.

## 2.5 Musical Fields

Adapting Bourdieu's concept of field to instances of a specifically musical nature requires greater specification of the musical field than was provided by Bourdieu himself. In this instance, the musical field responded to a similar logic as that of the world of (high) art, where knowledge and the correct appreciation of certain canonised works translated into cultural capital (Bourdieu himself was a great admirer of Beethoven). Upon closer inspection, the field of music, as it relates to young people in modern British culture, is far more variegated than this picture suggests. Since a defining element of field is the nature of the capital that is of value within it, we must be more specific about the differing normative values with which distinct forms of capital and hence fields are imbued. This leads us to consider the way musical materials are commonly explained and defined in terms of the musical genre to which they belong.

The variations in the make-up of a musical form's listening/participating public are, in part, a function of the historical trajectory followed by that form. That is, socially held understandings of the divisions between high and low, elite and popular forms within popular culture have served to establish assumptions, amongst listeners, about the appropriateness of their musical activities to their socio-economic and other circumstances. Classical music for example, with its longstanding historical associations with society's elite groups, is seen as representing attitudes, encouraging dispositions and facilitating musico-social activities of a sort very divergent from those of "classic rock" or "skiffle" music, both of which have established stronger historical links to working class culture. The nature of these values and attitudes, when taken together with certain material qualities of sound, provides the logic upon which the commercial organisation of artists and musical works into specific "genres" is based. From the point of view of record companies, musical genres effectively perform the role of structuring the musical marketplace into manageable units, thereby facilitating the most efficient dissemination and targeting of marketing materials. The way record companies constitute genres and their markets, taking in such factors as consumers' age, gender, ethnicity, disposable income, leisure habits, and so forth, indicates some of the ways in which musical fields can be said to obey certain *structural* regularities. In packaging

and marketing musicians efficiently and profitably. record companies' ability to manipulate and understand consumer trends are quite sophisticated.

Nevertheless, it must be borne in mind that what we are dealing with, in considering record companies' breakdown of the marketplace, is an idealisation – the creation of a *fantasy* consumer, one based around what the record companies know about the people they are marketing to. Most often, the directions taken by particular genres and the points at which they might be said to branch off into sub-genres depends not on record company executives, but first and foremost, on consumers, with the record industry following behind (although again, the extent to which this functions is dependent upon the followers of particular genres). Genre boundaries can thus be best conceived of as resulting from a combination of the historical structural demographic of certain musical forms' listeners together with a loose agreement among musicians, fans, writers, disc jockeys and record companies; it is this agreement which forms the basis of the consensus or doxa of genres or fields which describe not just who listeners are but also what their music means to them. As Simon Frith has suggested, the outcome of this situation is that 'the musical label acts as a condensed sociological and ideological argument' (Frith 1996: 85). Commitment to a particular genre of music can thus be meaningfully understood as, on some way, a commitment to that genre's broader taste public, the community of its other fans. As such, genre preferences might be seen as containing not only aesthetic components but also social and ethical dimensions.

Further, although genres define themselves by virtue of the relative exclusion of other musical forms (although again with particularly hybridic forms being a natural exception to this picture), we must remain conscious that an individual's adherence to one musical genre does not necessarily imply exclusion from others. Such is the way that genres are organised however, that consumers tend to coalesce around those according most with their social/ideological/ethical positions or lifestyles; rarely do actors attend to genres whose ideological, social and aesthetic values stand in very stark contrast to one another. Where individuals do express a liking for a very broad array of musical styles, evidence has indicated that this 'cultural breadth, or tolerance' can effectively be read as a distinctly postmodern form and 'source of cultural capital'

(Bryson 1996: 111). Indeed, even in cases where such ‘multicultural capital’ (Lamont 1992) or ‘cosmopolitan taste’ (Chaney 2002) is demonstrated by ‘cultural omnivores’ (Peterson and Simkus 1992; Peterson and Kern 1996), research has shown that there remains a distinct patterning in terms of the breadth of actors’ cultural tastes and their social status. Findings have also suggested, interestingly, that cultural omnivores imbued with high levels of cultural capital do, nevertheless, tend to exercise ‘symbolic exclusion’ (dislike) with regard to the musical preferences of those occupying society’s lowest strata (Bryson 1996).

That said, the composition of genres and the way in which their boundaries overlap or exhibit lines of demarcation for their taste publics is a complex and constantly shifting phenomena. While the doxa of long-standing sub-fields of music are slow to exhibit significant change, younger genres can find themselves collapsed into other genres over a relatively short period of time. I would contest then, that the field of music is best conceived of as a broad terrain composed of multiple sub-fields each of which operates according to an internal logic subject to the varying levels of influence brought by fans, record companies, writers, and other groups or organisations with specific connections to those particular sub-fields (such as conservatoires in the case of classical music). A complete description of each of these sub-fields and of the logics generally obeyed by them is far beyond the scope of this research. The key point to be borne in mind however is that such logics do exist and they might also be presumed to interact in distinctive ways with *musical habitus*. Furthermore, this interaction occurs in such ways that the primary focus of the activities scripted or prescribed by musical genres provide opportunities and affordances which particular formations of habitus are wont to reject, embrace or treat with indifference.

## **2.6 Community Music and Participatory Context**

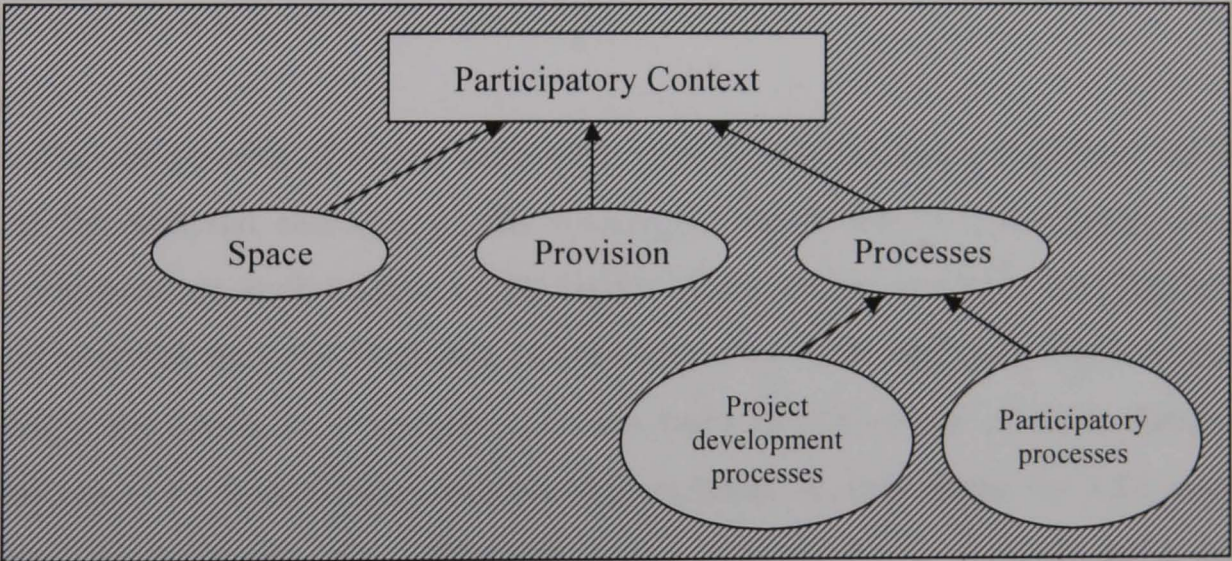
This section seeks to integrate into the current theoretical framework a picture of community music activities qua contexts for participation. The fundamental questions to be addressed here concern, firstly, the participatory contexts of youth-based CM activities, secondly, the nature of participation in CM activities and thirdly, how the aforementioned participatory contexts might subsequently relate to the *musical habitus*.



Through this approach I lay the groundwork for gaining an understanding of how, at the theoretical level, the key actors, norms and relations implicated in CM activities structure the distribution of CM project outcomes and their influence and import for young people.

“Participatory context” is a term used throughout this thesis to refer primarily to the combination of three sets of factors that make up community music projects qua participatory spaces. When taken together, the factors in question serve to structure both the ways in which projects function as well as influencing the make-up of their participants. The degree of interdependence of projects’ contextual factors renders them difficult to isolate and brings a high degree of overlap. The following factors are thus discussed in order to simply provide the reader with an idea of the nexus of elements liable to shape participatory contexts (see Figure 2.1). While each type of factor will, of necessity, bear particular import for specific projects, the extent to which this is the case can only be determined through a thorough exploration of particular instances of CM project activity (see chapters 5 and 6).

Figure 2.1 Elements of the participatory context



**2.6.1 Space**

The first set of factors influencing the participatory context considers “context” in a spatial sense, asking us to take account of the geographical location of projects and all that this entails – what geographers call “spatiality”; the conditions and practices of individual and social life that are linked to the relative geographical position of individuals and groups with regard to one another. Our attention is here turned to the

ways urban, suburban or rural locations, local socio-economic conditions, population densities, population demographics as well as other. broader environmental factors might impact upon community music projects.

Firstly, it should be noted that the geographical area within which a project is located will affect its capacity to access supplemental funding (such as Single Regeneration Budget funds). This is of some significance in instances where funding and resources are in short supply (see Chapter 6). This situation will also have knock-on effects for the resources at a project's disposal and the breadth of music making forms that might be provisioned. A further effect of geographical location is in, for example, determining the ease with which participants can actually travel to and from projects. This, in turn, asks us to consider which, if any, resources participants may need to rely upon in order to participate. For projects located in rural environments, for instance, where the population of potential participants is widely dispersed, it may be the case that only those young people able to rely upon their parents for transport will be able to participate at all. More prosaically, project locations are influential in determining the socio-economic background as well as (by association) project participants average education levels and prior experiences of music making.

Narrowing our breadth of vision somewhat, spatial considerations also function at the level of the material setting (i.e., the buildings) within which CM projects operate. Implicated here are such matters as the layout of the spaces available for CM activity, the way in which they are furnished, the facilities they offer and their regular uses, not to mention the extent to which projects can make exclusive use of them during CM sessions. Each of these factors implies opportunities or limitations for CM practice. Consider, for example, the difference between holding DJ sessions in a school classroom (replete with blackboard, teachers desk, educational materials, standard seating arrangements, and so on) as opposed to a youth club (furnished with settees, pool table, graffiti-decorated walls, in-house P.A. system and DJ booth). Either of these settings will inevitably bring consequences for the way CM activity takes place – in terms of encouraging or discouraging the involvement of participants, dictating the place-rules participants might assume to apply to them, the accessing of resources and.

perhaps most importantly, in dictating the atmosphere within which CM participation occurs.

### **2.6.2 Provision**

The second set of key factors for a project's participatory context relates to the nature of the CM provision made available. In shaping the way CM activities are provided, a decisive role is played by the project partnership. The organisations with which community music providers go into partnership in the delivery of music making opportunities ties in closely with the spatial considerations raised above, principally in terms of the specific spaces within which activities can take place and the meanings and associations of these for participants. In addition, choosing to develop a project partnership with any particular organisation (e.g., school or youth centre) will, as a result of the specific nature of that organisation, its staff, users and location, affect everything from the way projects' specific aims and objectives are determined to the levels of communication and commitment brought to the partnership. To these we can add the ways roles and responsibilities are determined as well as the strategies adopted and the resources available for pursuing them. Furthermore, establishing partnerships with particular host institutions can also be expected to affect the nature of the partner support provided (e.g., by youth workers, teachers, parents or other members of the community), the times at which CM sessions may take place, their duration, not to mention, once again, the nature of the local youth population from which participants will be drawn.

Of undoubtedly crucial importance to the way CM activities are delivered and hence participatory contexts structured, is the role adopted by CM practitioners and their employers (often community arts organisations). One way in which their influence is felt is in the material resources made available to projects. A second way, again linking up with the above discussion, is within the functioning of the project partnership and especially in community musicians' management of relationships with the employees of host institutions. A third realm of influence concerns community musicians' particular musical skills and the depth, breadth and flexibility of their knowledge, aptitudes and experience. Their skills in organisation, creative facilitation, community participatory



activism and responsive practice (see Chapter 6 for a discussion of these) will also be of some significance. Above and beyond CM practitioners' skills, we must also consider issues surrounding the appropriateness of their approaches within particular settings: there may be good reasons, for instance, why an opera project at an inner city youth centre or one focussing on DJing sessions in a private girls school fares poorly.

The role of community music practitioners, as the main facilitators of young people's participatory experiences, is also crucial in determining the way projects variously prioritise either the products of musical activity (i.e., musical achievements) or their processes (i.e., working processes). That said, the extent to which CM practitioners can take decisions over such matters might depend, more crucially, on issues relating to their employers and the stipulations of the bodies who provide projects with funding. As a result of the legacy of community music (discussed in Chapter 1), today, the community arts movement as a whole has adopted a position whereby, in order to sustain its case for funding, it must be seen to function effectively as a means of tackling social exclusion, promoting social cohesion and improving quality of life. Yet given that the outcomes accruing in less manifestly successful projects are far harder for community musicians to quantify (those, for example, where musical performance abilities are less integral, given the conditions of the work, than participation itself), this situation may lead some community music projects to seek to build on their more positive and visible attributes, focussing less on areas of slow progress and difficulty. Additionally, where projects do adopt a musical form best suited to attracting those young people most disadvantaged in terms of opportunities for music making, community musicians may need to have quite specific musical and interpersonal skills at their disposal (part musician, part youth worker, part teacher) in order to achieve results.

At the same time however, community artists, due in part to the community arts movement's long-held reluctance to be drawn into a domain of increasing professionalisation, have neither received due recognition for their work<sup>25</sup>, nor

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<sup>25</sup> Kelly (1984) refers to community arts being consistently regarded as something of a "marginal practice".



overcome an instinctive scepticism and fear of the quantifying activities of central government agencies. One result of this situation is that the provision of training has failed to keep pace with the demand for multi-skilled CM workers<sup>26</sup> and, at a time when CM is increasingly being asked to work with some of the most marginalized members of society, the skills required in CM provision and facilitation have become increasingly demanding. This situation has inevitable consequences for the widely held perceptions of CM work the nature of participatory contexts.

### 2.6.3 Processes

Inextricably connected to the effects of space and provision (yet best viewed as distinct from these for our current purposes) are the processes instigated by and within CM projects. These processes can be divided into two types; “project development processes” which are consciously instigated by the project partnership as part of a project’s establishment/initiation and “participatory processes”, which relate to the practices of “in-session” CM participation.

Project development processes are common to all instances of CM activity establishment yet inevitably follow slightly different paths, involving different actors, and organisations across projects. The first set of processes relevant to project development fall under the rubric of “initiation”. Initiation processes relate to the first steps in a project’s life: CM organisations’ acquisition of funding, their decisions about where and with whom to develop projects and in respect of the CM practitioners who will manage the project and maintain partnership relations. Thus, for instance, having acquired a tranche of funding from Youth Music<sup>27</sup>, CoMusica established a partnership with Glendale Middle School in Wooler, sending CM practitioner Helen to develop the

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<sup>26</sup> The changeability of participatory contextual factors and short-term funding provision often lead to difficulties in forward planning leading to project instability; inadequate facilities demand a high level of inventiveness and creativity; inter-agency work demands organisational ability and report writing skills; CM practitioners must also be able to relate well to young people, parents, project partners and funders; there is also a need to continue professional development and be able to pass on skills to trainees and apprentices. In short a broad, flexible and constantly evolving skill set is required of CM practitioners.

<sup>27</sup> Youth Music is a national charity set up in 1999 to provide high quality and diverse music-making opportunities for 0-18 year olds. It targets young people living in areas of social and economic need that might otherwise lack opportunity and predominantly supports activities that are held outside school hours. Youth Music receives £10m a year National Lottery funding through Arts Council England. It has also levered in more than £13.7m in partnership funding from other sources as of April 2005.

partnership and run a series of taster sessions<sup>28</sup> for the young people there. While the various stages of project initiation generally follow the same progression (possibly with several iterations when obstacles need to be negotiated), their specific functioning and the factors affecting them typically vary from one project to another.

Following project initiation, come the processes of project “preparation”. It is during preparation that key elements of the form of CM activity to be ultimately adopted are typically determined. Project preparation processes, usually taking place over the course of weeks and months, involve discussions and deliberations between CM providers, project partners and any other parties concerned (e.g. local area arts development teams). Their primary aims are to establish shared aims and objectives, an agreeable system of communication within the partnership, to allocate roles and responsibilities, to determine available resources and, lastly, to develop strategies of youth consultation and recruitment. At this stage, the specific musically participatory form to be adopted by the project may (yet also may not) be subject to the agreement of the project partners, potential participants, CM organisers and other stakeholders<sup>29</sup>. These are the key actors involved in CM projects. At the end of project preparation processes, projects will usually have developed a set of short term aims and objectives, determined a musical form to be used within CM sessions (e.g. steel panning, DJ tuition sessions or vocal work using technology) and have in place a set of protocols regarding partner expectations, requirements and obligations. At this stage, numerous key features of the participatory context will also be set in place. In fact, all that remains for participation to begin is for the project to carry out a process of participant recruitment/enlistment and begin the provision of activities.

Once the preliminary processes of project development have been negotiated (some of these, such as planning, reviewing, consulting, etc., should become ongoing features of

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<sup>28</sup> Taster sessions are CM workshops designed to give potential participants a “taste” of different participatory music making activities. They are used as a means of determining the appropriateness of particular aspects of musical participation for work with young people. .

<sup>29</sup> The degree to which such agreement is necessary and sought is variable. In some instances project partners may initiate contact with CM organisers with a specific form of participation envisioned; in others, CM organisers may run taster sessions with potential participants with a view to establishing the specific interests of a group; in other cases, all stakeholders have an input at various points in the negotiations.

project partnerships) and participants have begun to play a greater part in proceedings, projects begin to take on a character of their own and bring into effect a series of what I shall term “participatory processes”. Participatory processes are those enacted within the actual in-session, participatory encounter – during CM sessions and associated activities (i.e., performances, project collaborations). What we are effectively considering when thinking about the ways a project employs various participatory processes is the very nature of participation. Before going on to further explore what these participatory processes typically consist of, it is worth pausing briefly to consider the matter of participation more fully.

#### **2.6.4 Participation**

While participation is generally understood to refer to an active involvement in something, its meaning in terms of “young people’s participation” has, over recent years, come to adopt a tone that places increasing emphasis on young people’s involvement in decision making. Today, involvement in youth councils, youth roundtables, youth advisory committees, as youth advocates/consultants or as peer leaders is recognised as a crucial means of both empowering young people with voice, providing adults with insight into the key issues affecting the former, whilst simultaneously providing young people with a schooling in the democratic functioning of decision making structures. The UN Children’s Fund, for instance, defines adolescent participation as ‘adolescents partaking in and influencing processes, decisions and activities’ (UN Children’s Fund 2001). The recent upsurge of interest in children and young people’s rights to participation is largely due to the momentum being gathered, within the study of youth and childhood, by the implications of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child<sup>30</sup>. That said, the convention itself, being primarily concerned with protection, makes few noteworthy statements about participation beyond affirming children and young people’s ‘freedom of expression...either orally, in writing or in print, in the form of art, or through any other media of the child’s choice’ (Article 13, UN Convention on the Rights of the Child). Where the matter of participation has been more assiduously taken up, however, is in affirming the positive contribution it can

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<sup>30</sup> This convention was adopted by the United Nations in November 1989.

make to children and young people as well as the adult structures with which they come into contact.

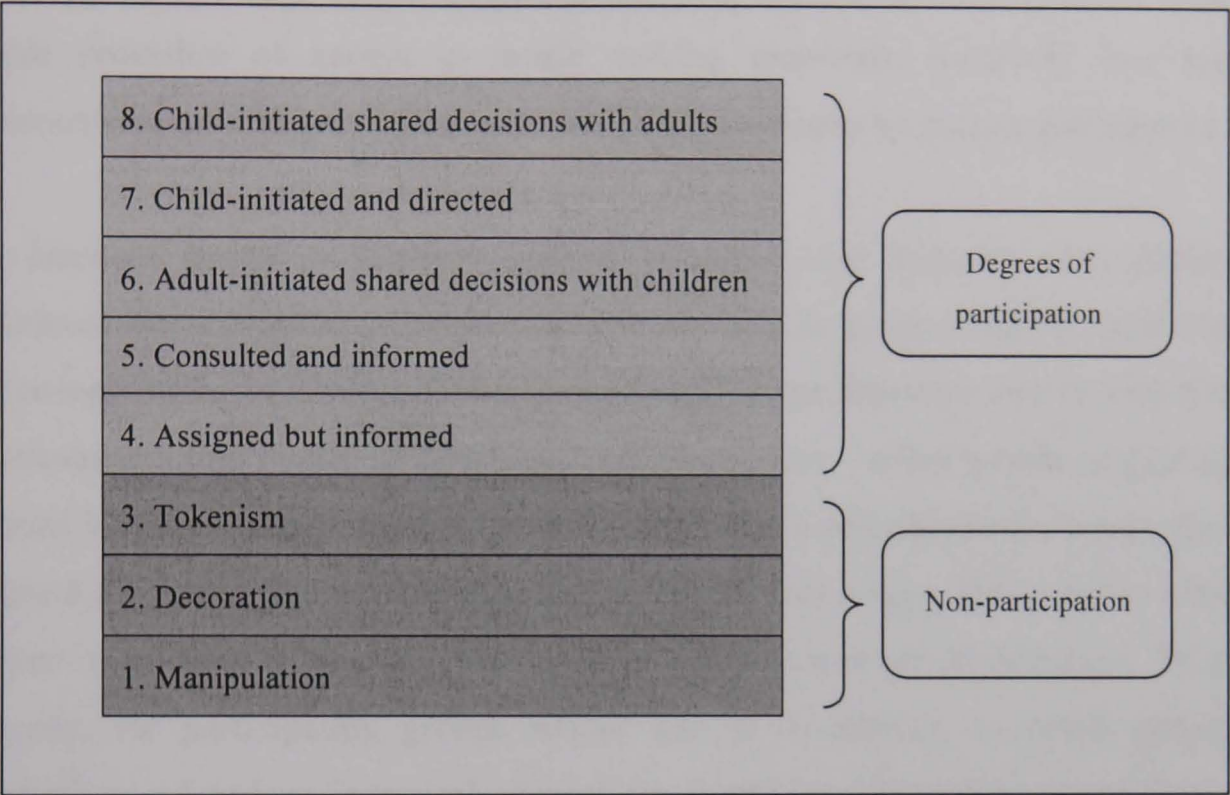
This perspective affirms not only children and young people's *rights* to participation but also recognises the potential inherent in granting the former an opportunity to accept responsibilities (see, e.g., Hart 1992). Participation of this kind, it has been claimed, is critical to self-development – children and adolescents do not develop by being passive, it is through participation that they ‘develop skills, build competencies, form aspirations, gain confidence and attain valuable goods and resources’ (Rajani 2001: 3). The more young people participate meaningfully, the more experienced, competent and confident they become, which in turn puts them in a position to participate more effectively. Such experiences, it is claimed, contribute to psychological well-being through giving young people a sense of control over their lives. Further, participation, when well facilitated, encourages a democratic ethos – opportunities for participation in shared decision making, listening to different points of view, and weighing options and consequences can help build a critical appreciation of democratic processes. Ultimately, these skills and aptitudes, once developed in young people, may, it is hoped, go on to strengthen civil society within liberal western democracies and build social capital (see, e.g. Putnam 2000).

Appreciating participation in this way asks us to consider the different ways and extents to which youth-oriented participatory projects provide opportunities for engendering different sorts of outcomes. In order to help us think about the different forms young people's participation might take, Roger Hart has developed what he terms a “Ladder of Participation”. Hart's ladder is probably the best-known and most widely used model for understanding young people's participation in community life. It is presented below in Figure 2.2.

To give an example of the lowest and least rewarding level of participation on Hart's ladder, “manipulation”, imagine pre-school children carrying political placards concerning the impact, upon them, of social policies (of which they have no real understanding). The sixth rung of the ladder, on the other hand, represents true

participation – although initiated by adults, the decisions made are here understood by, and shared with, young people. The underlying idea is a simple one; a crucial component and intrinsic value of children and young people’s participation concerns its decision making component.

Figure 2.2 Ladder of Participation (Hart 1992)



This dimension of participation is directly relevant to the issue of young people’s participation in arts activities; it has come to be seen as especially important and valuable by those examining community arts projects (Matarasso 1997; Williams 1997a; DCMS 1999; CapeUK 2004). Such decision making involvement can take a number of forms, from influencing the nature of the participatory musical activities to be provisioned, to deciding when, where and if performances will take place to making choices about musical products and working styles. Naturally, important as it is to avoid the assumption that young people understand very little about how to organise and manage their participatory activity, it is equally important not to assume that they know everything either. Decision making opportunities ought thus be “scaffolded” and young people supported in their deliberations. The issue is one of balance and appropriateness.

Undoubtedly, then, decision making can be considered a key participatory process and its influence is liable to extend to the range of other processes enacted within any



project. In certain senses, the processes involved in the teaching-learning of music making (and music-related activity), for instance, can be expected to reflect the inherent power dynamic established within instances of young people's participation. In fact, with respect to the nature of teaching-learning processes we might stipulate a continuum (reflecting Hart's ladder), at one end of which we find participatory activity characterised by a high degree of guided teaching while at the other end we would find simple provision of access to music making materials, relatively low levels of guidance/support and much greater power being exercised by project participants.

The issue of power or decision making influence also links to other participatory processes: the regulation of behaviour, rule institution, group working, peer-education and co-operation. In initiating these processes, CM practitioners will be called upon to demonstrate a high degree of flexibility and adaptability – some groups of young people respond better to certain approaches than others and work delivered through the use of different musical styles will serve to dictate, by its very nature, the extent to which CM workers may need to exercise less or more control over group activities. To give an example, for participating groups whose aim is to achieve a certain performance standard *as a band* (as is typical of steel pan bands and drumming ensembles), group co-ordination and co-operation, the regulation of behaviour and attention to instructions from the community musician will assume considerable importance. A number of participatory process are intertwined here – where there is too much disruption to teaching-learning this may lead to a slower rate of progress in musical terms which may, in turn, fail at the level of the maintenance or encouragement of participants' motivation, interest and commitment (further participatory processes). Processes which function to regulate standards of behaviour, co-operation or attendance will thus typically operate in accordance with a pragmatic concern to sustain the integrity of the participatory environment in a way satisfactory to all stakeholders<sup>31</sup>. Both the way and degree to which particular participatory processes are enacted is thus, whilst ideally responsive to the particular participatory needs and styles of the young people involved,

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<sup>31</sup> Of course, returning to our earlier point regarding control over power and decision making, where young people are seen as the key actors within participatory contexts, matters regarding the way teaching-learning is undertaken ought rightly reflect young people's own preferred *modus operandi* before those of adult stakeholders.

also a function of the doxa of those musical fields to which certain music making activities correspond.

Further processes implicated in CM participation are numerous and vary in their nature from project to project. Amongst them we can include listening, recognising and affirming capacities, resourcing, re-working structures, honouring and celebrating (through rewards and rituals), nurturing relationships (bonding, networking), as well as challenging, questioning and reassuring. Some of these processes might be undertaken by any or all of those involved in participation while some might be considered more appropriately the preserve of community musicians and the other adults involved. One thing that ought to be borne in mind at all times, however, is that young people's participation is self-selected and as such, participatory contexts will need to appeal to young people if they are to sustain their participation. In order to get a better understanding of the relative appeal of participatory contexts for young people and the way in which outcomes are developed within them, it will be necessary to understand the bases of young people's relationships with these contexts. What follows then, is a discussion of the multiple influences participatory contexts may bear for young people and of the ways in which aspects of the *musical habitus* might, in theory, relate to these.

### **2.6.5 Participatory Contexts and *Musical Habitus***

The relationship between participatory contexts and young people's *musical habitus* can be considered as mutually influential. That is, the nature of the Bourdieuan and *musical habitus* of projects' participants can be expected to vary according to factors issuing from the considerations of space, provision and process (as discussed above) while these factors themselves may also, through participation over time, bring their own influence to bear on young participants' Bourdieuan and *musical habitus*.

To begin with the spatial dimension of participation, we might postulate how certain youth groups' relative proximity to, or distance from, concentrations of cultural activity (i.e., geographically located contexts for young people's musical and music-related activity, live music venues and clubs, record shops, and so on) will impact upon elements of young people's *musical habitus* through, for example, dictating the relative

salience of musical ties in young people's musical lives. We might also expect the social demographics of particular project settings to impact upon local young people's *musical habitus* through structuring the number of young people of particular ages within local contexts (thereby setting limits on the age ranges of project participants), while an area's socio-economic conditions can be expected to impact upon the nature and levels of music making experience and access to music-making resources, not to mention consumption of music and related phenomena. The basic assumption here is that higher levels of socio-economic deprivation imply less access to opportunities for "legitimate" music learning and making<sup>32</sup>.

In addition, the material settings of projects (be they schools, youth centres or others) will be likely to have an effect on the *musical habitus* of those participating. Recall, in this instance, the findings of Roe's research (1983, 1987, 1992, 1995) correlating school-commitment to adolescent music preference. On the basis of such findings, one can expect those young people exhibiting low levels of school-commitment to be less inclined to participate in projects set within school settings by simple dint of their connection to the school. Similarly, the fact that 'children who participate in youth clubs tend to have personal and family characteristics associated with adult social exclusion' (Feinstein et al. 2005: 6) will have implications for the Bourdieuan and *musical habitus* of those participating in CM projects set within youth centres.

In terms of the type of provision made available within participatory contexts, we can firstly note the obvious effects projects' reliance upon particular musical forms or genre styles will have for the *musical habitus* of those choosing to participate. Where, for example, the music making activities undertaken (or the *ways* in which they are undertaken) call for particular levels of skill, experience, ease or confidence in approaching musical materials, there will also be implications here in terms of *musical habitus* of those choosing to participate. Further, the way CM practitioners deploy specific teaching-learning regimes will also interact with young people's preferred styles of learning and group activity in particular ways. In these instances, more

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<sup>32</sup> This much is clear from the way in which funding distributing organisations such as Youth Music determine the bases of their decisions about how to allocate funding; this is usually done on the basis of measures of social deprivation as they pertain within electoral wards.



didactically and formally composed participatory contexts will, for example, be conducive to encouraging the participation of those young people who are comfortable with such approaches as opposed to those for whom musical activity is more usually a domain characterised by self-direction and independent action.

Lastly, the processes implicated in CM participatory contexts will also, for some of the reasons outlined above, affect the composition of CM project participants and of their *musical habitus*. Although project development processes such as “initiation” and “preparation” might be considered less significant in this regard, there will nevertheless inevitably follow distinct effects from the ways and degrees to which young people are active in the planning and strategising of project aims and practices. If, for instance, there is a failure to involve those potential participants who are characterised by a narrowly defined set of musical interests in project planning and strategy development, there is a risk that the processes of participation ultimately enacted will fail to successfully connect with these young people’s musical interests, restricted as they are. Effectively then, the inappropriate distribution of power over decision making, where this is normally retained exclusively by young people themselves in their music related activities, may in fact function to restrict the appeal of some forms of participation. The above point assumes particular significance when it is supplemented by an acknowledgement that low numbers of participants<sup>33</sup>, under-valued or somewhat apathetic participation typically brings (through low motivation, lack of positive reinforcement and the exposure of participation to an over-reliance on a small number of participants) broadly detrimental effects for projects as a whole (see Chapter 5 for evidence and discussion). That said, for some groups of young people, the ability to exercise control over their music making activities are less significant than the opportunities to simply get involved in playing and learning. In such cases, issues surrounding the degree of young people’s power to influence decisions will be of lower importance for projects as a whole.

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<sup>33</sup> Although there exist no strict formulas, where participant numbers are either too low or too high within the context of a given musical practice, provision of an appropriate participatory context can prove problematic and/or an inefficient use of resources. Given the way projects tend to evolve and stabilise over time (in accordance with what they can reasonably provide), across a range of different contexts, CM organisers, partners and the most committed participants tend to work in consort to achieve a workable project format.

Questions of how, why and whether or not projects enact other participatory processes (e.g., celebrating, group bonding, networking, peer education, performing and so on) turn our attention to the ways other social and cultural norms of participation might also interact with particularly predisposed *musical habitus*. In terms of their interpersonal dimensions, for example, there exist numerous possible planes of social interaction and network building within the contexts of CM projects. Naturally, one of these relates to inter-participant friendship building; co-operative music making has a recognised ability to create bonds between participants (Blacking 1995; Becker 2001). Given the well-recognised paucity of informal, out-of-school socialising opportunities available to some young people, CM projects can also provide a context within which actors' social networks can be broadened and new reference groups constituted. Where projects undertake collaborations or exchanges with other projects then, this can open out onto a whole new horizon of social and personal opportunities. To cite one example, significant perspective-taking opportunities were recognised by several of my respondents as a result of meeting young people from Trinidad, young people with dramatically different lifestyles to themselves. In these instances, then, participants may value participation more for reasons associated with sociability than musical activity per se. Such factors also alert us to some of the ways participation might subtly alter young people's Bourdieuan and *musical habitus*.

As well as providing a context for peer group interaction and friendship building for participants, where projects involve parents or other members of local communities in their activities, the influence upon participation (both in terms of its appeal and outcomes) must also be borne in mind. The relationships established here can carry import not only for those participants who build productive and co-operative relationships with adult members of their communities but also for adult community members who, through their involvement in projects, come to build ties with local youth, other adults, community musicians and local organisations. Importantly, the context within which these ties are initiated is typically one of fruitful collaboration and voluntarism.

Crucially, though, as much as CM participation may create opportunities for participants to interact with other young people and supportive adults, they also function as meaning-laden settings for cultural creativity. There are several important dimensions to this hugely important aspect of CM participation, involving both individual and group expression. One way personal or group expression may occur is in decisions about the musical form to be adopted in a project. In the case of some types of musical activity, a highly significant aspect of individuals' involvement with a particular form of music derives from just that – their choice and use of it. When a young person decides to take part in creative activities based around a specific musical style or genre, this, in and of itself, constitutes an act expressive of their interests (as well, perhaps, as their time of life, their attitudes, their locality and so on). Of course, CM activities also provide contexts rich with opportunities for far more sophisticated means of expression than simple choice of music – sound's active manipulation naturally plays a fundamental role for many. Work focussing on a musical piece's subject matter or its lyrical content are especially notable for their importance within some participatory contexts (e.g., adolescent female pop and vocal groups), while in others, performance style, costume, "attitude" or dance steps may bear greater significance for participants.

Indeed, given the way musical materials can carry potent textual and representational meanings in the ways they are consumed and used, the expressive dimensions of musical activity (especially for those young people previously excluded from music making opportunities) often relate less to the subtle manipulation of sonic materials than to the use of music as a "badge" of association or bearer of socially and personally significant meanings of one sort or another. That said, the ways participants make use of the expressive musical materials at their disposal clearly indicates that working with sounds and musical instruments holds a fascination and symbolic import all of its own. Participants may view their involvement in music making activities as a source of inspiration, as simple fun, as an educational experience (or escape from other educational experiences) or else as an expression of a whole panoply of emotional states and substantive statements at the individual and group level. Each of the above factors will inevitably be found more or less appealing, interesting and motivating by young

people with distinctively configured *musical habitus*, as well as, as has been noted, potentially acting to modify elements of this too.

Meaningful outcomes of CM participation can also be witnessed at the level of a local community, school, youth club or organisation of another sort. Projects set in school contexts, for example, can alter participants' perceptions of educational environments, possibly providing feelings of attachment and belonging or a domain for success and validation in such a setting. Projects supported by locally-based partner organisations can also serve to validate an activity or its participants in the eyes of the wider community, hence altering what may be negative local perceptions of young people's out-of-school activities. In some cases, CM projects come to be embraced by communities and participants as a source of local pride and renown. They can also provide the basis for fruitful exchange with other CM groups in their region and beyond, thereby encouraging participants to see their own locality or community in a different light, as well as exposing them to experiences in other communities. Naturally, the extent to which such processes take place depends largely on the particular values held by diverse local communities and project participants.

The factors at play here relate to embedded attitudes, such as, for example, understandings about the way music carries meaning or the types of circumstances in which it might or might not be appropriately used, as well as the types of responses generally assumed to accompany its performance. In short, these factors concern the nature of diverse approaches to music qua material phenomenon and means of social communication or commentary. The fullest exploration of the nature of such factors cannot be provided in the context of this theoretical chapter but will, rather, emerge in the course of my discussion of the case studies undertaken in the course of this project.

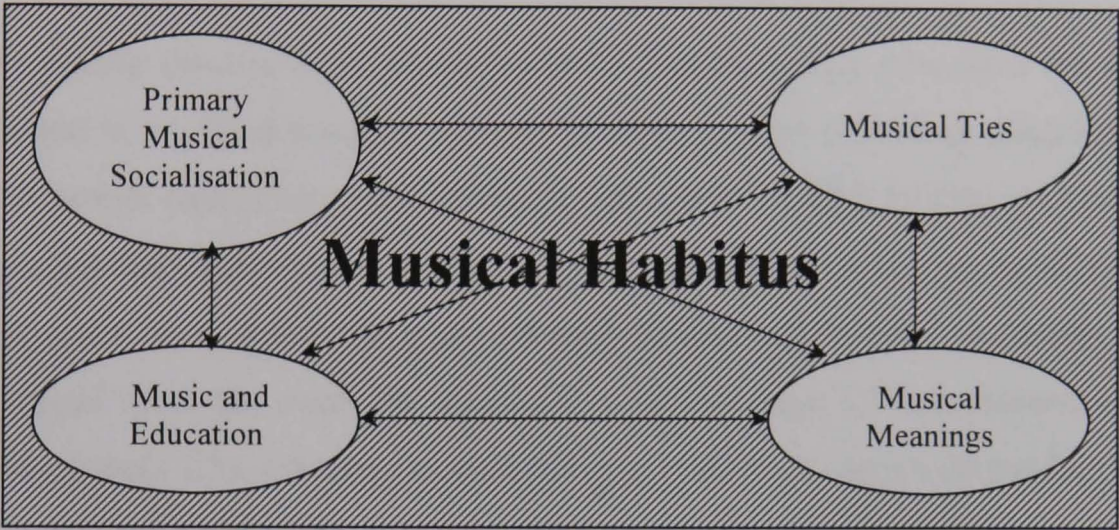
## **2.7 Conclusion**

This chapter has highlighted the main theoretical strands that underpin the analysis carried out in the substantive chapters to follow. Chapter 4 adds empirical detail to the concept of *musical habitus*, demonstrating how it serves as a valuable tool through which to understand the variously salient elements of young people's attitudes and



dispositions with respect to music, music making and music-related activity. Through an examination of young people’s musical preferences, their musical ties, their prior experiences of music (in the home, at school, outside of school), not to mention the various meanings of each of these for them, the classificatory and evaluative functions embedded in young people’s *musical habitus* are revealed. The basic factors at play within this picture are presented in Figure 2.3 below. This provides valuable insights into the ways music’s different (sub-)fields are perceived as holding relative value for project participants, as well as matters concerning the degree of *illusio* (commitment) young people bring to the *doxa* (orthodoxies) inscribed in particular fields.

Figure 2.3 – Formation of *musical habitus*



As much as the concept of *musical habitus* permeates many of the issues considered in the forthcoming chapters, we must nevertheless remain conscious of Bourdieu’s assertions concerning its indeterminacy, its “more-or-less”-ness. Thus in cases where young people’s accounts disclose evaluations and classifications which fall out of step with the subsequent operations of their *musical habitus*, this must neither be ignored nor seen as in some way anomalous. Rather, with recognition that the ‘practical logic of the habitus is capable of sustaining simultaneously a multiplicity of confused and ...contradictory meanings’ (Robbins 1991: 112), these accounts must be further investigated for the insights they might yield, however much complexity this adds to the overall picture.

Taking forward the results of this analysis of *musical habitus*, Chapter 5 can now investigate the role of the *musical habitus-as-action-generator*. Particular attention is

paid here to how the dispositions embedded in young people's *musical habitus* figure in their deliberations with respect to the uptake and continued participation in community music activities. The framework provided above with respect to ways of thinking about participatory contexts subsequently emerges as a key means through which to explore how CM outcomes are derived as a result of the multifaceted participation of young people endowed with distinctive *musical habitus*. This analysis also yields insights into the continuities and ruptures encountered when young people endowed with specifically composed *musical habitus* come into contact with specific participatory contexts. The picture is as yet incomplete however, requiring a fuller exposition of those factors serving to structure participatory contexts.

The foregoing discussion of participation and participatory processes sits at the centre of Chapter 6, as the discussion turns to address themes including consultation and the broader power dynamics within projects, dilemmas of CM facilitation and the factors influencing the establishment and subsequent operation of the case study projects. This chapter goes on to reintroduce the concept of *musical habitus*; particular attention is here placed upon the ways the dispositions therein urge CM practitioners to consider aspects of their CM practice, especially with respect to issues of product/process and degrees of participation (Hart 1992). Upon the basis of the findings from these first two empirical chapters then, and armed with the preceding theoretical framework, Chapter 6 is now well placed to uncover the limitations, and significant, social structurally-informed challenges with which particular participatory contexts may find themselves faced. Before moving on to an analysis of this study's empirical findings however, Chapter 3 considers the methodological issues faced and the research approach adopted.

# CHAPTER 3 – RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

## 3.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the research design adopted for this project and the methods used in order to meet its objectives. In line with the noted difficulties of understanding the variety and range of outcomes developed through individuals' participation in community arts activities (Matarasso 1996, 1997; Moriarty 1997; Allin 2000; Coalter 2001; Jermyn 2001), this research applied qualitative methods of data collection in order to grant participants the opportunity to describe their involvement in music making activities in their own terms. The aim of this strategy was not only to contribute to the refinement of the methodologies capable of specifying the personal and social outcomes of particular community music interventions but also to allow for greater sensitivity to participants' different ways of approaching music making activities. In this, the philosophical and practical exigencies of the study also called for an approach able to recognise the locatedness of power within both the participatory and research contexts. A primary aim of the study was thus to generate hypotheses and findings inductively, out of the accounts of those intimately involved in the creative musico-cultural opportunities provisioned.

The chapter begins by discussing the context of the study as an ESRC CASE collaboration; this section's aim is to put the organisational context of the study into perspective and disclose the broad nature of the project and its aims as they were initially envisioned by the CASE partnership. Following this, in section 3.2 I outline a number of key considerations which affected the focus of the study, going on to clarify the ways in which these influenced the methodology ultimately used and the overall design of the research. This includes firstly, outlining the initial research brief, secondly, providing an indication of suitability for the position of researcher and the various strands of my involvement in the CoMusica programme of community music activity. I next discuss, with reference to the community arts literature, several key methodological challenges faced by any attempt to understand and explain the outcomes of community arts participation. These sections provide general background to the project.

Of considerable import to the overall project was my negotiation of the roles of academic researcher, community music trainee and project co-participant and it is to this, along with issues surrounding positionality (i.e., my specific position as defined by race, gender, class, and other socially significant dimensions) and access that my attention subsequently turns in one of the chapter's most substantial sections. I next provide an overview of the data collection methods used in the course of the study and discuss the ways in which these were, and practically could be applied within the four different research contexts. Following this, my attention turns to the rationale adopted in the selection of the four CM project cases that provided the research contexts for the study. Finally I provide substantive details of the cases selected, describing the salient factors serving to influence the nature of the data gathered as well as its implications for the study as a whole.

### **3.1.1 Context of the Study: ESRC CASE Collaboration**

An important point to be recognised before discussing research methods concerns the form taken by this research project, since it differs from that traditionally adopted by doctoral courses within the social sciences. This project came about through what is known as a collaborative or CASE<sup>34</sup> studentship developed between the Learning and Participation Department of The Sage Gateshead and what is now the School of Geography, Politics and Sociology at the University of Newcastle upon Tyne. CASE studentships, jointly designed and supervised by an Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC)-recognised university department and a non-academic organisation, provide funding for students to undertake study for a PhD degree whilst conducting research of relevance and value to “real world” or policy contexts. In recent decades there has been an upsurge in the number of collaborative projects between academic and non-academic organisations, including CASE Award Research Studentships. Such collaborations can span the entire spectrum of research activity in the engineering, natural, physical and social sciences, from that traditionally viewed as “blue skies” to that generally considered more “applied” (Bell & Read 1998).

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<sup>34</sup> “CASE” stands for “Collaborative Awards in Science and Engineering”. The acronym is reflective of the fact that CASE studentships’ origins lie outside the traditional remit of the social sciences.



According to the ESRC, CASE programmes offer a range of benefits, to both potential students and collaborating organisations (ESRC 2006). For the student, there exists the opportunity to gain insight and skills in carrying out research based in institutions outside of academia; a factor of some value in a research climate within which the emphasis is placed on research with commercial or industrial potential. Collaborating organisations, meanwhile, benefit through accessing expertise which does not exist within the company or which it may not be cost effective to develop in-house. In the longer term, ESRC CASE students may come to be seen by collaborating organisations as potential employees, since they offer increased opportunities for ongoing research and development within host institutions. CASE studentships are also of value to academic partners. Where there exists a recognised need for higher education institutions to attract new sources of funding, the development of relationships with non-academic organisations, who are increasingly contracting out research in the UK, sits well. Indeed, the UK government also recognises the value of social science research projects which encourage ‘direct user engagement’ (Blunkett 2000: 7) and CASE studentships consequently accumulate points on the RAE rating system, through which funding is allocated to university departments.

At the same time, CASE studentships present a number of challenges to not only the research student but also to collaborating organisations. While Bell and Read provide some useful general advice on the establishment and running of CASE studentships in *On the Case* (1998), most of this guidance is primarily relevant to potential academic supervisors. Writing from the perspective of the research student, Macmillan and Scott (2003) cite three inherent difficulties of CASE studentships: confidentiality, access and ownership. Issues surrounding confidentiality and access shall be dealt with in an ongoing way throughout the course of this chapter. In the meantime it is sufficient to note how such difficulties can be considered part of what Peck (1999) refers to as ‘the inevitable, and often awkward, compromises that follow from carrying out research for a “client”’ (Peck 1999: 131). The matter of achieving ownership of the research project however, merits consideration alongside discussion of my immersion into the field of CM activity with the CoMusica programme of the Learning and Participation

Department of The Sage Gateshead, since it was at this stage of the research process that the primary focus of the project was altered to better respond to the overall needs of the community arts as a domain of academic inquiry.

### **3.2 Immersion Into the Field: CoMusica Traineeship**

The nature of this CASE research project called for relatively specific skills from the student researcher. Alongside experience, knowledge and proficiency in social science research methods, an interest and aptitude in the area of music learning and performance were keenly sought by the CASE partnership<sup>35</sup>. One reason for this was that the initial research proposal presented to the ESRC formulated the research project as a participatory study in which the successful applicant would follow The Sage Gateshead's community music traineeship. My own experiences of learning, playing, recording and performing music were of immediate value in light of this requirement. Though a self-taught and distinctly (though far from decidedly) non-formal student of music for around 14 years at the outset of the studentship, my understandings of CM activity were, at that time, quite limited. For myself, involvement in music making had developed very much out of the "teenage bedroom guitarist" paradigm. I learnt by copying from records, writing songs and "jamming" with friends before joining and leaving a number of short-lived pop/rock group incarnations while at university. I only began performing and recording in earnest several years later, after joining another group<sup>36</sup> and releasing a number of records through an independent label. Now playing harmonium as well as guitar, I performed regularly with this band throughout the UK over the course of several years. By the turn of the millennium I was recording a soundtrack to a film made by a Sheffield-based company<sup>37</sup>, subsequently contributing to a number of compilation albums and providing beginners guitar lessons. At the time of writing, my prime musical concern revolves around a band<sup>38</sup> with which I have been writing, recording as well as promoting local music events in South Yorkshire and performing nationally. Most recently, this band's activities have extended into film making, collaborating with animators and performing with a variety of improvisers.

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<sup>35</sup> One element of the interview procedure for this studentship consisted of a musical performance.

<sup>36</sup> Website: [www.big-eyes.co.uk/](http://www.big-eyes.co.uk/)

<sup>37</sup> Website: <http://www.slackjaw.co.uk/>

<sup>38</sup> Website: <http://profile.myspace.com/index.cfm?fuseaction=user.viewprofile&friendid=12498599>

Over the years, then, I have turned my hand to numerous aspects of music-related activity in addition to playing: designing promotional material, organising and arranging facilities, hiring, buying and selling equipment, learning how to use computer software and other technology, motivating, supporting and communicating.

Naturally, these experiences had already encouraged a personal insight into the enjoyment, frustrations, efforts and rewards involved in non-formal music making and music-related activity. They also stood me in relatively good stead in terms of undertaking the CoMusica Community Musician Traineeship that occupied 40 hours each month from January to July in the first year of the studentship. Indeed the first year of the studentship involved what can only be described as an in depth immersion into the world of community music activities as practiced by the Learning and Participation Department of The Sage Gateshead. In addition to the activities prescribed by the CoMusica Traineeship (see chapter 6 for further details) I visited a number of CoMusica projects across the Northern region, sat in on planning meetings for a host of events and CM sessions, participated in additional bespoke training weekends for would-be community musicians and spoke with a host of CM practitioners, participants and project partners. Through such immersion I came to develop an understanding of The Sage Gateshead's approach to CM provision, CoMusica's structuring of staff time and responsibilities, the networks and collaborations with which some projects were involved as well as the different forms of CM practice being applied across the whole programme. At this time I was also involved in the planning and organisation of a large-scale community music programme that sought to encourage the participation of Gateshead residents in the celebrations accompanying the opening of the new Sage Gateshead building. Unfortunately, due to shifting timetables, my steadily increasing involvement in the preparation for this event was curtailed so that I might focus more on projects whose activities fell into line with the timescale of the studentship.

### **3.2.1 Assessing the Challenge**

Over the course of this "immersion" some of the study's key features emerged, albeit in embryonic form. Principally, given my place on the CoMusica traineeship and its overriding focus, taken together with the emphasis of much recent policy and practice

with regard to community arts activity, it became clear that the questions being posed by policy-makers, funders and practitioners alike could be most effectively and realistically addressed through focussing the study upon the CM participation of young people. This period of intense and yet relatively unstructured exploration also granted the opportunity to investigate the considerable “grey” literature and published reports focussing upon the outcomes of community arts activity as well as the more sociological and musicological interpretations of youth culture and especially the role of music and music-related activity in young people’s lives. During this time I became increasingly familiar with both the theoretical and practical bases of community music activity. Looming large in my thinking at this time, and especially so considering the nature of the ongoing debates within the community arts, were the numerous methodological and practical difficulties that would face any attempt to fulfil the original research brief. Essentially, the approach outlined in the initial proposal sought to develop an understanding of the role of community music activities at the level of local economic development. My principal reservations here concerned the notion of “economic development”; although there was little doubt that various personal and community-level outcomes develop out of participation in CM activity, from my initial investigations, any determined focus upon economic development implied paying less attention to the ways in which different personal and community level outcomes provide a basis for different economic ones.

Born of both my own experiences of community arts activity and those reported by others in their research (see, e.g., Matarasso 1996; Moriarty 1997; Williams 1997b; Allin 2000; Jermyn 2001), it was clear that any attempt to measure or account for the “harder”, economic outputs of community arts activity must, in order to be attributable to actors’ participation, first provide an explanation of the “softer”, personal level outcomes which then lead on to harder outputs. The distinction between the differing kinds of outcomes of community arts participation and their knock-on effects had already been proposed by Fred Coalter (2001) in his adaptation of the differentiation between “intermediate” and “strategic” outcomes made by Boviard et al. (1997). Here, strategic outcomes include such factors as the creation of jobs and the development of social inclusion (i.e., forms of economic development) while intermediate outcomes are

broader and more amorphous, including such things as a sense of local identity, increased social cohesion and improved quality of life. For Coalter, the achievement of strategic outcomes depends upon the successful achievement of intermediate outcomes. Having distinguished the harder, strategic outcomes from the softer, intermediate outcomes, Coalter goes on to suggest that the real need faced by the cultural industries is to develop an understanding of the ways in which, and the extent to which different sorts of cultural activity develop personal social capital outcomes and practical outcomes, encourage personal confidence and self-esteem outcomes, deliver educational impacts and contribute towards health promotion. Effectively, Coalter is here presupposing the functioning of a chain of causality which, in terms of community arts participation, first calls for an analysis of the individual-level outcomes of participation, before going on to address the “local” or bounded “community” level intermediary outcomes, and from here onto any contributions made to strategic outcomes. Only from an analytical position capable of tracking the influence of community arts participation from the point at which it impacts directly upon individuals (i.e., *in* or *through* participation) on to its broader, intermediate and strategic outcomes might the role of CM in local economic development be justifiably posited.

Coalter’s recognition of the need to focus initially upon the variant nature of personal level outcomes reflects an appreciation of the complex mechanisms through which local economic outcomes might be realised. At the same time, he concurs with many other commentators in seeing the task of comprehending individual level outcomes as both a contentious one and one which presents substantial theoretical and methodological problems. In her review of the role of the arts in tackling social exclusion, Jermyn (2001) highlights a number of interlinked issues surrounding measurement of the outcomes of participation in arts activities. A primary difficulty concerns the appropriateness of scientific methods, and particularly those relying heavily on the use of quantitative methods, for measuring such dimensions as self-confidence, quality of life or for capturing the life-changing effects an arts project may have on individuals. Establishing formal and objective baselines or starting points for measurement may be extremely difficult (impossible if outcomes are not/cannot be predicted) as can the quantification of progress. Furthermore, there are no absolute measures as far as self-

confidence or motivation are concerned and individuals are likely to progress from different baselines at different rates. Concern has also been expressed that any specific, clear and measurable outcomes may not in themselves reflect the complexity of social impacts (Jermyn 2001). Matarasso (1997) concurs in this regard, suggesting that the outcomes of arts participation are highly complex because ‘people, their creativity and culture, remain elusive, always partly beyond the range of conventional inquiry’ (Matarasso 1997: 86).

In effect, the situation facing community arts projects tasked with accounting for their outcomes using methods from the positivist paradigm is something of a Catch-22; the only way to determine the “distance travelled” in terms of the individual-level outcomes of participation is by taking measures (of whatever kind) before and again after participation. At the same time, however, the arts researcher or evaluator cannot necessarily know in advance what, if any, the outcomes and meanings of any actor’s participation might, for that actor, be. For researchers to determine their own criteria would thus be to ignore what Matarasso refers to as ‘the legitimate subjectivity of different stakeholders’ (Matarasso 1996: 14) and may thus risk placing values of only low significance to participants and projects at the heart of outcome assessment. Furthermore, even in instances where the indicators relied upon are those pertinent to participants’ experiences, outcomes may only materialise some time after participation, thereby implying the need for a longitudinal approach. Given the time limitations implied by this research project and the nature of its precise aims, both longitudinal and distanced travelled approaches were, unfortunately, unfeasible.

In other instances, the methods used for exploring outcomes may fail to take account of the self-determination projects seek to encourage, or be inappropriate for projects that have a democratic/participatory ethos. Pre-determined indicators also prevent the identification of unforeseen or negative impacts since there will usually be no benchmarks against which unforeseen and negative impacts can be measured. The establishment of formal measures or criteria of success may thus be wholly inappropriate for capturing the outcomes of participation as they impact upon the

intended beneficiaries of community arts activity: the participants and their communities.

Underpinning such reservations about the ease and accuracy of attempts to assess the outcomes of arts participation is recognition of the fact that the creative, participatory encounter is often a subjective and personal one. Certainly, other measures can be made of individuals' participation (its duration, the activities of which it typically comprises, the amount of times it was undertaken) yet each of these measures may fail to capture what we might term the *value* of the encounter, in terms of the extent of its meaningful content. Meanings are, after all, fundamental elements of art, of creativity and of culture, and meanings can fluctuate in their salience and substantive content from one individual to another within the same overarching cultural context. Writing on the subject of sociological explorations of young people's relationship to music and music culture in *The Social Meaning of Pop* (1974), Paul Willis' sentiments echo those of some community arts evaluators:

Though we may readily agree that a truly social explanation of human activity needs to go beyond the subjective accounts rendered by participant actors, a theory which has no way of accrediting the primary level of human experience - subjective experience - proceeds with a missing centre.

(Willis 1974: 5)

Matarasso (1996) suggests that the legitimacy of activities, feeling or relationships which are difficult to measure in quantitative terms, is frequently called into question simply because they are difficult to express using conventional systems. His sentiments are strongly echoed by Moriarty (1997) who cautions against measurement being seen as the necessary guarantor of action or as the only way of validating experiences, especially those that are difficult to quantify. While some aspects of community arts participation do lie open to conventional forms of inquiry, unless these are sensitively and responsively used, they may completely miss the meaningful component of the arts activity as it generates and sustains the involvement of participants. Indeed, it is perfectly conceivable for a community music project to provide excellent opportunities in terms of encouraging self-esteem, communication skills, co-operation and music

learning whilst nevertheless lacking the ability to capture the interest of potential participants or provide them with valued or sought-after meanings. Undoubtedly crucial aspects of young people's community music participation then, are the meanings and associations brought to the musical encounter, whatever form that may take.

Though generally passed over in arts evaluations and reports in favour of more straightforwardly verifiable and "funding-worthy" outcomes, the core elements of the musical encounter and the physical, mental, emotional or social phenomena to which it may give rise are, for many participants, the ultimate intention and purpose lying behind their participation. To relegate what participants consider the fundamental and primary impetus for their involvement to the status of little more than a carrot on a stick would thus have severely adverse repercussions for any attempt to glean an understanding of the processes involved in CM participation. In fact, to ignore this core aspect of the musical experience has two important effects upon any path of inquiry. Firstly, it becomes very easy to lose sight of the basic human qualities which impel current generations, as they did past ones, to seek to discover, express, display and undertake any other number of discreet activities which each of us consider to be representative of our culture(s) and the values implied by this relationship. Secondly, it hides from us the opportunity to harness the potential latent in young people's inquisitiveness, their rebelliousness, their apathy, their single-mindedness or their openness.

### **3.2.2 Project Reorientation**

While investigating the literature surrounding participatory arts outcomes assessment and its associated methodological difficulties, several issues of key importance to this research project emerged. Clearly, the relative infancy of evaluation and outcome assessment methodologies in the non-for-profit sector, as noted by Kelly and Kelly (2000), needed to be taken into account. As a consequence of this infancy, it appeared clear that there still remain a good number of unresolved debates within the community arts about how to define value; in part a reflection upon and reaction to the shifting agenda being envisioned for the community arts by central government and its associated agencies. In this I was particularly interested in the observations made by Matarasso (1996, 1997), Jermyn (2001, 2004) and others of the need to focus upon the



multifarious outcomes of artistic or creative cultural activity and to subsequently develop means of reflecting the aspirations of diverse stakeholders. From my initial investigations of the CoMusica programme it was clear that different projects undertook varying working practices, adopted alternative primary foci and generated the participation of quite different groups of young people. To speak generically of “community music projects” thus appeared to undermine the considerable variation evident within the field. Following the suggestion by Harland et al. (2000) that the term “the arts” may be unhelpful if it leads to the assumption that outcomes associated with one art form are broadly the same as those of others, it appeared clear that the same could be said of the term “community music”. To simplistically assume that one set of broadly drawn evaluative criteria could account for the ways different experiences and outcomes of CM participation influenced the other aspects of participants’ lives (and, by extension, those of other members of their communities), therefore appeared to offer inadequate scope for gaining a full and comprehensive understanding of different participants’ relationship to the participatory musical encounter.

At the same time, however, too great an emphasis on young people’s subjective accounts of participation and its sometimes-idiosyncratic outcomes would also risk overlooking the need to understand the complex nexus of nevertheless generic processes which operate at the root of young people’s CM participation. Matarasso has here considered the approximation of albeit purely subjective understandings with practical, quasi-objective patterning or inherent tendencies.

By recognising that the same activity or programme can be perceived differently, depending on one's point of view, it may be possible to create a composite picture which is, if not the truth, at least a reliable basis for further action.

(Matarasso 1996: 14)

In other words, more case study accounts of a merely “anecdotal” nature would achieve little in pushing forward CM practitioners’, funders’ and policy makers’ understandings of the ways specific sorts of community music intervention generate effects and outcomes of particular kinds. In essence then, it became clear that the outputs of this research project could be most productive if they were to yield both an in depth and

appropriately sensitive understanding of young people's differing experiences of CM participation while at the same time attempting to posit more broadly applicable theories and hypothesis relating to the purposes and intentions as well as the outcomes of CM participation. My research agenda consequently fell into line with calls made for the need to disentangle the mechanisms and processes underpinning the variously construed effectiveness of arts activity (Jermyn 2001), factors which reflect the co-operative and creative values of the community arts (Matarasso 1996) and simultaneously provide guidance to those seeking to 'identify best practice, understand processes and the type of provision best suited to achieve particular outcomes' (Coalter 2001: 5). Furthermore, the adoption of a case study methodology capable of taking a holistic perspective on the many elements at play within different community music projects could respond to the shortfall in understanding noted by Blake Stevenson Ltd (2000) which results from failures to analyse and present information as a complete picture of a project, its processes and outcomes.

Naturally, in such an ambitious undertaking, there will be no way of overpowering the criticisms of those sceptics adopting a strictly theoretical research perspective. That is to say, there is no way of establishing clear cause and effect between CM participation and any outcome or motivating factor in a participant's life. That said, as Matarasso suggests, this ought not be seen as a critical issue by virtue of the fact that 'the decision making processes of public administration...depend on the balance of probability rather than on the elimination of reasonable doubt' (Matarasso 1998: 5). While it is thus impossible to make a cast iron case about the numerous and highly variable outcomes and motivations associated with young people's CM participation, it does, nevertheless, remain possible to provide indications of the patterning of tendencies as well as discursive and practical dispositions associated with young people's varying *musical habitus*. It also thus remains possible to describe the nature of the understandings encouraging differing forms of participation and note the processes subsequently impacting most appreciably upon CM project outcomes.

### **3.2.3 Approach Adopted**

Following my initial investigations of the CoMusica programme of CM activity along with my examination of the state of theory and practice from the literature pertinent to CM activity, the initial research brief underwent a number of amendments. Reorienting the focus of the study away from a concern with the local economic outcomes of CM activity (what Coalter terms strategic outcomes) more towards the search for an in depth understanding of the prior, individual-level factors leading to higher level outcomes implied the need to renegotiate the parameters of the study with the CASE partner. Guiding the overall progress of the research, and the first point of negotiation in this process was the Project Steering Group Committee. The core members of this committee comprised my two academic supervisors, the Head of Postgraduate Study at The University of Newcastle, while the representation from the CASE partner was made up of the Director of Learning and Participation at The Sage Gateshead along with the organisation's Higher Education Development Officer. Such committees are primarily formed in order to help negotiate any problems encountered during the course of the research studentship and to keep the research on track through assessing progress reports. The committee met three times per year throughout the duration of the study. Ongoing research findings and the implications of my explorations of related literature were discussed within the steering group, and the members of the steering group deliberated their implications for the study as a whole.

Upon the presentation of my proposal of the study's reorientation, the members of the steering group committee were satisfied that the project's new focus would be of value to the ongoing activities of the CASE partner, would serve the broader field of CM activity research (thereby contributing to policy deliberations) and hold adequate scope for the generation of a doctoral thesis. The initial case study approach proposed in the original research brief would, it was settled, continue to serve the research's amended focus well. Rather than focus upon only two projects, as was initially envisioned, it was now agreed that further cases of CM project activity could be included to add breadth and scope to the findings and provide further opportunities for comparison and hence theory generation and verification.

In essence then, the project had now come to adopt a more exploratory form that had been initially envisioned. By investigating the nexus of interrelated project factors, isolating those of key salience within specific settings and comparing this across different settings, it was hoped that there would emerge a picture of the major factors generating different outcomes for participants, patterning their levels of enthusiasm and motivation in CM participation and encouraging or discouraging their participation. Naturally, given the human and material resources at the research project's disposal, it was recognised that such findings might generate more by way of further hypotheses and theories that would remain in need of further verification than could necessarily be validated within the scope of this research. In light of the paucity of academic research focussing upon participatory CM activity however, it was agreed that this CASE studentship provided an ideal opportunity to respond to the many previously unexamined aspects of this work.

Following the aforementioned amendment of the research's prime focus, the steering group committee also needed to be kept abreast of the practical and theoretical decisions that followed. At this level of planning and discussion the balancing act between the project's need to contribute to theory development and policy making, while also being of practical utility for the CASE partner, was maintained relatively unproblematically. That said, as is true of most CASE studentships, the adoption of particular data collection strategies, agreement of proposed research outputs and chosen empirical contexts remained subject to the mutual agreement of the steering group committee. As has been noted by Macmillan and Scott, this aspect of CASE studentships can impact upon a researcher's sense of ownership over the project:

Strictly speaking, the researcher remains the lead stakeholder, but the involvement of other people in the research design, facilitation and examination of the results renders the lines of ownership a little less clear.

(Macmillan & Scott 2003: 102)

Thankfully, in the case of this CASE studentship, few issues surrounding ownership of the research process arose at the steering group committee level. Undoubtedly, the fact that the proposed research focus would be of immediate and clear value to the CASE

partner facilitated an easy relationship characterised by ongoing support and the provision of appropriate advice and guidance. This situation was no doubt further alleviated by virtue of the personalities involved in the project's overall steering; both of the CASE partner representatives were quite familiar with working with outside organisations and recognising the need for flexibility and adaptation in their working practices. Indeed, both the Director of Learning and Participation and the Higher Education Development Officer at The Sage Gateshead brought a wealth of experience and practical understanding to the ongoing discussions surrounding the project. In particular, the CASE partner's Director of Learning and Participation was most supportive and amenable to the adoption of a reflective and exploratory approach to the CoMusica programme's CM practice model which was itself an ambitious and innovative undertaking, developed over the course of years of experience in the field. Where issues did arise regarding both my ownership of the research process and my precise role within CoMusica's ongoing CM delivery practice, was at the point of carrying out fieldwork within project settings. It is to a discussion of this fieldwork that we now turn.

### **3.3 Conducting the Fieldwork**

This research's fieldwork primarily involved studying four CM projects as case studies. This number of cases was selected simply by virtue of the fact that it was the maximum number of cases that could be studied in sufficient depth, given the aims of the research and the time and resources available. The rationale informing the selection of these cases is detailed in section 3.4 of this chapter. In the current section, I focus more particularly upon issues surrounding the conduct of fieldwork within and across these settings, beginning with a discussion of the ways in which access was gained to them and my role negotiated within them.

#### **3.3.1 Access, Positionality and Role Negotiation**

While issues of access might be assumed to be less problematic where collaborating organisations are in a position to help researchers in "getting in", as has been noted by Macmillan and Scott (2003), there nevertheless can be a danger of selection bias if

collaborating organisations are overzealous in directing the research student towards possible research participants.

Access in a CASE project has been facilitated, but it may be structured access.

(Macmillan & Scott 2003: 103)

While the negotiation and achievement of access to potential research contexts was largely unproblematic, an associated factor did have more significant implications for fieldwork. This concerns the fact that, since CoMusica project leaders initially brokered my access to the research settings and, in two of the four case studies, indirectly structured the timing of my subsequent access to projects, participants and project partners often consequently assumed my role to be that of a Sage Gateshead employee. Despite having explained the nature of my role to the participant group and the project partners upon first entering each of the four research contexts (as being that of a researcher undertaking a collaborative project), first assumptions remained difficult to overcome. One of the implications of entering fieldwork settings alongside representatives of the CASE partner organisation was that the reflexive positions I subsequently adopted would need to be considered carefully and managed appropriately.

Issues surrounding researcher positionality are everyday occurrences in the field. Increasing recognition of the impossibility of achieving objectivity or adopting a value free position in fieldwork settings, of completely eliminating the biases and subjectivities of the researcher and of recognising the effect that this situation subsequently has upon the gathering and the interpretation of data has brought an appreciation of the need for reflexive forms of research to the fore (Hammersley & Atkinson 1983; Scott & Usher 1996; Daly 1997; May 1999; Breuer & Roth 2003; Guillemin & Gillam 2004). All social researchers are positioned subjects, defined by factors such as race, age, gender and class, each of which can play a key role in influencing the relationship between the researcher and the “researched”. Consequently, those undertaking qualitative research must be aware of how their style of self-presentation and specific alignments in the field are also important factors, capable of

influencing the manner in which you, as researcher, are interpreted and responded to by those you research.

An awareness of the potential effects of positionality upon data collection and field relations implies that impression management becomes part of the reflexive strategy adopted in the course of fieldwork. At the outset of undertaking fieldwork, a number of factors, some within my control, some beyond my control, conspired to create various opportunities to adopt reflexive positions vis-à-vis my research population. A significant element in this was my fluid negotiation of the roles of trainee CM practitioner and researcher during the course of participant observation.

As has been mentioned, through being introduced to project stakeholders by project leaders and other CM practitioners, I was already, in some way *connected to* The Sage Gateshead and its community music practitioners. Such introductions appeared to bring with them a degree of immediate trust and easy acceptance from participants and partners – on no occasions did any participant or partner voice reservations about the fact that I was undertaking a research project which, as they were made aware, they now formed a part. Following my initial declaration of the research project I was carrying out, however, for some weeks I made no subsequent mention of the project to participants, nor did I ostensibly carry out any activities which would be necessarily seen by participants as typical of a “researcher”. Moreover, few of the young people involved in the study were familiar with social research and consequently had few preconceptions about the sort of activities that their involvement in the study might imply. Indeed, at this early stage in the fieldwork, my intention was not to divulge too much information about the study to participants; my prime concern at this time was to develop rapport and trust with participants, only providing fuller information as and when this would be required in line with ethical considerations. In some respects then, these factors served to help many participants and project partners to temporarily forget or else largely ignore the fact that that my primary aim was that of conducting research.

In retrospect, it is easy to see why many participants initially overlooked my researcher status, instead assuming my role to be that of a trainee CM practitioner; I often arrived

at CM sessions with CM workers, dressed in a similar way to them, adopted a similarly informal demeanour, occasionally assisted them in unloading and arranging musical equipment and spoke regularly with them in research contexts, especially prior to and after CM sessions. On a number of occasions I also assisted in the delivery of sessions, engaged in ongoing activities and participated in group discussions. In fact, such an approach reflected my aim of not only establishing good rapport with participants but also with the CoMusica CM practitioners alongside whom I was working. Assisting them in whatever ways I could seemed like a reasonable trade-off for the occasional awkwardness of having a researcher follow them in their daily work<sup>39</sup>.

My desire to assist and not hinder the community musicians implicated in my fieldwork also resulted from an awareness that their work could involve considerable personal exposure and present them with significant challenges. Further, it appeared important to take heed of commentators' observations that the burden of evaluation recently entering the community arts world has met with some resistance from practitioners (Reeves 2002), and to take steps to avoid being seen as a further part of such an evaluative burden. Consequently, I was eager to demonstrate my usefulness to the CM practitioners, my recognition of the challenges facing them, and, as much as possible, to avoid being seen as an encumbrance or hindrance to their work. At the same time, I was also conscious that one means of earning the trust of participants and project partners would be through being seen to assist, support and collaborate effectively with the already trusted CoMusica workers.

A further reason for quietly encouraging, at least initially, a perception of my role as that of trainee CM practitioner/researcher resulted from the nature of CM sessions themselves. That is, since participatory CM sessions typically involve musicians encouraging participants to open up and seek to be expressive and creative in their activity, I was also conscious that the overt presence of a researcher could be perceived as a hindrance. The importance of performing a role that could both reassure participants of my non-judgemental attitude and be seen by CM workers as supportive

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<sup>39</sup> I remained aware throughout my fieldwork that the community musicians involved in the study had been given little choice in the matter of whether or not they wished for one of the projects they were working on to be studied – this was simply assumed to be part of their job by their employer.



of their efforts was thus required. The role of trainee CM practitioner again served me well in this; participants appeared to view me as a supportive and easy-going “friend” to the project, while CM practitioners were at liberty to call upon me to fulfil a range of basic tasks such as would be expected of any community musician trainee. As a result of the adoption of this “trainee” role I had the opportunity of interacting regularly with participants, encouraging their trust and building relationships with them whilst entering into discussions about their musical tastes and current music-related activity.

A further factor compelling me to maintain a degree of involvement in the delivery of CM sessions issued from the fact that I had followed the CoMusica community music traineeship with some of the apprentice practitioners alongside whom I subsequently carried out my fieldwork. Despite offering numerous reminders of my role as researcher to them, the time I spent with them on the traineeship and in associated meetings appeared to have had the effect of convincing not only some apprentices but also project leaders that, in most ways and situations, I should be treated no differently from any other CM apprentice. Once again, I felt little need to constantly remind other trainee CM workers of my research role; as was also the case with participants and project partners, their assumptions were close enough to the truth and sufficiently benign in nature to only warrant occasional correction.

Foremost in my thinking during the early period of my fieldwork was the need to observe the activities of CM sessions in a way as uninfluenced by my presence qua researcher as possible. My intention was primarily to develop relationships that could be of subsequently high value in the collection of data. Consequently, I gave high priority during the first phases of my fieldwork with case studies, to what Shaffir (1998) refers to as the role of “sociability” in sustaining field relations.

It is highly desirable for the participant observer to perform multiple roles during the course of a project, and gain at least a comfortable degree of rapport, even intimacy, with the people, situations and settings of the research.

(Jorgensen 1989: 21)

Placing a high value on sociability involves the recognition that as people go about their daily routines, they may be much more attentive to the various qualities of the researcher (e.g., trustworthy, humorous, friendly, open and non-judgemental) than they are to the purpose of the research, consent forms or credentials. At this early stage in my fieldwork I was also keen to encourage participants' perceptions of me as someone who was culturally credible – this implied framing my language use in ways that reflected theirs (within limits) as well as picking up on, and reading up on, their cultural referents. Through encouraging such sociability and credibility, my aim was to limit the extent to which my presence in the field would be 'inconvenient...sometimes physically uncomfortable, frequently embarrassing and, to a degree, always tense' (Shaffir, Stebbins & Turowetz 1980: 3).

That said, while it was initially useful to be able to downplay my role as researcher in some projects, it was far from being the case that this was equally achievable across all projects. While my adoption of a role as a sociable trainee CM practitioner thus functioned effectively at Raby Street and also had some bearing on my role negotiation at Galafield, at Redcar and especially so in Wooler, the lines between apprentice community musician and researcher were more clearly drawn from the outset. The principal reasons for this issued directly out of the nature of the differing participatory contexts within which I found myself. The way this typically worked out in practice was for me to participate more (suggesting, prompting, encouraging) at those CM projects whose sessions were already characterised by a relatively fluid and less structured behavioural dynamic (i.e., Raby Street and Galafield), while remaining more in the background during the sessions at those projects where participation was more tightly structured (i.e., Wooler and Redcar).

Naturally, in those circumstances where my involvement in the delivery of CM sessions was greater, the scope for observation and noting sequences of events or utterances (i.e., recording and documenting) was somewhat diminished; my solution, in these instances, was to take short breaks from whatever activities were ongoing and to quit the scene in order to record my accounts and reflections directly onto Dictaphone. Although participating in sessions would thus occasionally limit the breadth of my observations,

through engaging in activities and dialogue with participants and through establishing relationships with them in the process, multiple avenues of enquiry could be pursued and interesting findings revealed. Recognising how my access to participants, and thus the opportunities for relationship building at Wooler and Redcar, would be limited by their circumstances, in the case of these two projects I made special efforts to spend more time with participants both during and after sessions, instigating conversations which sought to reveal their thinking about the activities in which they were participating and explore the ways these activities connected to others areas of their lives.

In effect, I remained conscious, throughout my fieldwork, of the need to recognise the potential impact of my presence in sessions and of the degree to which my positionality would call for both reflexive awareness and adaptive behaviour. As a result, the roles I adopted within specific contexts varied in accordance with their nature. Since participants of both the Galafield and Raby Street projects spent time within the youth centres with whose staff CoMusica had established partnerships, it was, in the case of these projects, easier to gain access to project participants away from the CM sessions. I thus spent time attending both youth centres, building relationships with their youth workers, engaging not only the project participants, but also the other young people in these settings. Through carrying out participant observation in a quasi-ethnographic style, generating a broad understanding of the role played by music in these young people's lives was more easily achievable. Additionally, this facilitated the development of trust and reciprocity with groups of young people who demonstrated some suspicion of outsiders.

Gaining the acceptance and ultimately, the trust of participants was a matter of particular concern at Raby Street. I had seen Connexions employees and arts workers try and fail to gain the acceptance of the lads using the centre and I was keenly aware that I would need to make considerable efforts to pass the lads' tests and overcome the kind of reservations that they appeared to have towards most visitors to the centre, were I to gain the insights desired. The efforts required to earn the trust of the young people at Raby Street were, while echoed somewhat by the girls at Galafield, nevertheless

considerably greater than in any of the other case studies chosen. One challenging aspect of earning the acceptance of these lads involved communicating to them my trustworthiness. This I achieved in a number of ways. On one occasion, for instance, as I stood close to the centre's DJ booth observing the activities inside, a chocolate bar was thrown by one of the young people on the settees behind me, striking me on the back of the head. Recognising this to be a test of sorts I turned, picked up the chocolate bar, smiled and offered a simple "Thanks" in the direction from which the bar had been thrown, before promptly eating the bar. Although slightly intimidated by the situation, I was aware that to have reacted by alerting the youth workers to the incident or by removing myself from the situation may not have exactly ingratiated me to the lads – it was far better to have simply accepted it and carry on as if it was of no real significance.

Over time I was able to build rapport with the staff and the lads' group at Raby Street by playing football with the latter, refereeing games when youth workers were unavailable, helping out at the centre's summer barbeque and setting up the record decks on occasions where neither the appropriate youth centre staff nor CoMusica employees were on hand to do so. Through integrating myself into the activities of the centre in this way, I gradually gained the acceptance and cautious friendship of a good number of the lads' (although some continued to eye me warily) and adults in the centre.

The role I had come to achieve within the centre was significant in not only encouraging the young people to discuss their lifestyles, musical habits and tastes with me but also insofar as it allowed me to play a key part in the development and execution of the "Fusion" live music event, which was organised between myself and a number of the centre's young men and youth workers. My close involvement with the preparation for this event had two beneficial outcomes for the research project. Firstly, within the context of my ethnographic approach to the Raby Street case study, the event acted as an experimental "intervention", through which I could test hypotheses generated. Secondly, it further solidified my relationship with several of the older lads as well as bringing me into closer, sustained contact with many of the younger lads using the

centre. This meant that my subsequent discussions with the lads and lasses in the centre became freer and easier than had previously been the case.

Given the success of my close and sustained relationship with the participants of the Raby Street project I was keen to develop similarly open relationships with the girls involved in the CM activities at the Galafield centre. The variance in the nature of the group's activities did, however, mean that it would be necessary to adopt an alternative approach within this context. Following an initial discussion with the girls about the ways in which they listened to and, significantly, watched music, I decided to use visual media as means of disclosing the associated meanings of the girls' relationships to music. This I achieved by bringing cassettes of music videos into the centre and watching these with the girls, probing them about their comments and seeking justification for their opinions in a naturally inquisitive way. During this video session I also made a point of offering my own opinions and judgements to the group. However much the girls ridiculed such opinions, my honesty and willingness to expose myself to criticism did nevertheless serve to establish a level of reciprocity. Issuing from this was an easy subsequent dialogue with the group as a whole. Since this group also attended several CoMusica gatherings at which I spent a large amount of time in their company, both the girls' and their youth workers' perception of me as trainee community musician/researcher was supplemented by that of supportive friend and helper.

Such quasi-ethnographic research approaches as were adopted at Raby Street and Galafield were, it must be recognised, facilitated in part by the facts that the youth centre settings made "hanging out" a possibility and their proximity to my base in central Newcastle brought them within relatively easy geographical reach. Neither of these facts were true of the projects in Redcar and Wooler (both distant and based on school premises), although the Wooler project participants' use of the nearby youth centre did allow some leeway for spending time around them in settings not of a strictly musically-oriented nature. Thankfully, the enthusiasm and warmth offered by the young people participating in both of these projects toward their respective community musicians appeared to hold true of me, by association, and the need to put in extra effort to establish rapport was far less pressing a need in both contexts than had been the case

at either Galafield or Raby Street. This situation was further aided by the far more easygoing and less suspicious stance adopted towards “outsiders” by both of these groups. They also reflected the way these projects’ participant felt less immediate ownership of their “in session” CM activities. Consequently, while the amount of time required to get to and from the Redcar and Wooller projects from Newcastle (around an hour in either direction for both projects) implied that the opportunities for a sustained and quasi-ethnographic approach would be limited, the relative ease of building relationships with the young people involved meant that the need to establish my credentials was less pressing. At the same time, given the time limitations of the access to these groups of young people, I consciously devoted more time to my interviews with these groups and, where possible, sought other forms of data about projects and participants experiences of them (e.g., through reading SteelQuake members’ diaries<sup>40</sup> from their time in Trinidad).

A number of often interrelated factors thus served to influence the nature of the role I adopted, qua researcher, within the different case study contexts; many of which factors, it might be added, served to dictate the functioning of projects themselves to considerable degrees. As has been mentioned, the geographical proximity of the projects was one factor that served to dictate the regularity of my visits to projects. Above and beyond this, my role adoption fell into line with other rules of thumb; where participatory contexts were looser in structure, based within non-formal educational contexts or where CM sessions offered participants ample opportunities to determine for themselves the nature of their activities, my position was one of curious observer/co-participant/trainee community musician. Within contexts where CM sessions functioned according to a more rigid structure, were set in more formal educational contexts or where CM sessions were of a more clearly didactic bent, my adopted position was closer to that of full observer.

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<sup>40</sup> These diaries were made available to my by the lead community music practitioner in Wooller with the full consent of the young people concerned. Extracts from these diaries have not been used in this thesis; rather, they were used to simply gain a flavour of the experiences gained by young people and of their responses to them.

### 3.3.2 Processes of Data Collection

While comprehending the variously conceived poietic and aesthetic<sup>41</sup> dimensions of actors' musical activity may indeed be an impossibility on the part of an investigator of community music projects, one can nevertheless gradually uncover some of the ways in which particular cultural phenomena and their associated activities hold meaning for actors located within specific cultural milieus. This can be achieved by putting the creative or representational cultural act in a context whereby it can be given an approximate weighting in terms of the significance it holds. This requires a flexible, open-ended process for identifying and defining concepts, and appropriate procedures for collecting and evaluating evidence. Such requirements can best be responded to through the adoption of a broadly ethnographic approach involving such methods of enquiry as participant observation, informal discussion and encouraging the testimony of key informants. Consequently, during the initial periods of fieldwork, the two principal strands of data collection that formed the basis of my investigation were in-session participant observation, alongside participant observation and informal discussion of a more ethnographic, participatory and, at times, experimental nature in out-of-session contexts.

### 3.3.3 Participant Observation

As a means of uncovering the world of everyday life as viewed from the standpoint of insiders and revealing the meanings (realities) people use to make sense out of their daily lives, participant observation is recognised as being of particular value (Hammersley and Atkinson 1983; Jorgensen 1989). It is a data collection method that aims at instigating concepts, generalisations, and theories (Kaplan 1964) by facilitating the development of theories grounded in concrete human realities (Glazer and Strauss 1967; Agar 1986).

As was mentioned in the previous section, periods of participant observation provided the basis of my fieldwork at each of the four case studies (although the degree to which this could be of an ethnographic or participatory nature varied in relation to the

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<sup>41</sup> *Poietic* and *aesthetic* are terms used in semiotics, the study of signs, to describe perceptive and productive levels, processes, and analyses of symbolic forms. In this context they can be considered as relating to artistic creation and reception respectively.

constraints and opportunities of each case study setting). As the first fieldwork case study to be undertaken, an extensive period of participant observation (occurring over the course of approximately 3 months) took place at the Raby Street centre. Concurrently, I was visiting further CM projects in order to find further appropriate cases for inclusion in the study. The findings from this initial period of participant observation provided the preliminary basis upon which numerous processes and aspects of CM participation were subsequently conceptualised. As participant observation data from subsequent case studies fed into the overall research framework, these initial conceptualisations were reconsidered, refined and expanded.

In addition to each of the four case studies, participant observation (of a varying nature along the participation-observation continuum) was also undertaken at a number of CoMusica Gatherings<sup>42</sup>, Partner Days<sup>43</sup> and community musician planning meetings<sup>44</sup>. As was the case in the participant observation undertaken in and around CM projects, in these instances, I strove to time, shape, and minimise my provocations in order to encourage respondents to express themselves with a “natural” sense of their familiar situations. At each step along the way of my gradual immersion in to the CM activities of the Sage Gateshead then, I was building up a fieldwork diary containing observations, ideas, propositions, further questions and tentative hypotheses. The data and the ideas collected through this process, together with my ongoing forays into the literature surrounding young people and music provided the basis for the semi-structured interviews that formed the second wave of my data collection at each project.

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<sup>42</sup> CoMusica Gatherings are organised activity and performance days that bring together CoMusica CM youth groups from across the region. As such, these quarterly events typically involved project participants, their community musicians, project partners (where available and willing) as well as, in some cases, members of participants’ families. Although gatherings varied in their specific focus and nature, on average, they brought together anything between 150 and 250 people.

<sup>43</sup> Partner Days are organised by CoMusica to facilitate the sharing of ideas and good practice between all the CoMusica project partnerships (i.e., bringing together project partners and the community musicians working with them). During the period of fieldwork, they took place on a quarterly basis.

<sup>44</sup> The community musician planning meetings I attended were held weekly between those CM workers responsible for the practice that took place within selected geographical areas (e.g., the community musicians working on Newcastle-based projects). Project updates were provided by each project’s lead CM practitioner and the ensuing discussions considered such issues as partnerships, resources, gatherings/performances, collaborations and staff development.



### **3.3.4 Semi-structured Interviews**

Semi-structured interviews were carried out across all case studies, primarily focussing on project participants but also including community musicians, project partners and other stakeholders (e.g., support workers and participants' parents). In line with the broad emerging themes of the research, discussions with participants centred on their whole relationships to music and musical activity, both past and present, and lasted for an average of around 50 minutes. The interview schedule upon which these interviews were based is provided in Appendix IV. In seeking to encourage respondents to address the multifarious aspects of their musical lives in a semi-structured way, these interviews posed "grand tour" (descriptive overviews) as well as "mini-tour" questions (seeking more detailed exploration of particular matters). Broadly speaking, the partial structure of these interviews sought to parallel the chronology of young people's experiences with music; after briefly establishing rapport through a discussion of their current musical interests and music-related activities, the interview schedule first directed attention towards young people's childhood experiences with music before gradually working towards the present day, where the discussion sought to approach the matter of musical activity from a number of perspectives. This schedule was determined in line with two sets of concerns; one relating the tentative hypotheses guiding the study (i.e., seeking to uncover the factors influencing young people's attitudes and dispositions towards music and musical activity), the second relating more closely to an awareness of the value of allowing young people to provide a narrative of their associations with music to date and of the meanings and everyday contexts concerned. The fact that discussions sometimes digressed into areas of discussion whose importance had not been foreseen was, rather than being seen as a hindrance, viewed as offering the collection of rich data which, when used alongside other materials, could provide considerable insights.

In conducting these interviews I strove to remain conscious of the power dynamics inherent in such unnatural situations and consequently aimed to place respondents' concerns at the centre of the interview process. This was achieved by conducting interviews in settings convenient, familiar and comfortable to them, by demonstrating understanding and empathy with the lives of the young people being interviewed and by

allowing participants to determine the flow of conversations as far as was reasonably possible. In this my age and youthful mien, social background and relative knowledge of the cultural and musical forms of interest to many participants, together with my theoretical approach to young people's creative cultural activity provided the basis for something of an equalisation of status between interviewer and interviewed; based in the approach I adopt towards CM activity, participants were to be viewed as, in many important regards, the "experts". Given that most of the interviews conducted during the course of the study involved young people, I was also keen to stress at the outset of interviews how, as respondents, they were empowered to pause or stop the interview whenever they wished and to also ask questions of me. Prior to interviews, I provided respondents with a brief overview of the areas I would like to cover, asked permission to use a tape recorder (none refused), carried out a "sound-check" (allowing them to listen back to themselves on tape) and explained issues surrounding consent and confidentiality.

Naturally, despite my best efforts, interviews did not always run as smoothly as they might have. There were a variety of reasons for this. On some occasions respondents suddenly became extremely terse or affected in the way they presented their opinions, diverging considerably from attitudes I knew them to be willing to express outside the interview situation. This situation could have arisen for any number of reasons, yet I was always at pains to point out that none of their opinions about sessions, teachers or community musicians would be directly attributable to them at any time, nor would the interview tapes be listened to by anyone except myself. In instances where it was clear to me that participants were being substantially less candid or talkative due to the interview situation, I usually paused the tape recorder and took a short break. This provided an opportunity to lighten the mood, reaffirm the confidentiality of participant's responses and encourage them to simply relax and be themselves as much as possible.

Several other issues developed out of the need to use limited institutional or organisational spaces within which to conduct interviews; disturbances from teachers or youth workers (who needed to access the room being used) were not wholly uncommon. Again, in these instances tapes were paused temporarily and respondents

encouraged to take their time before resuming. Indeed, this situation was not wholly negative; in order to respect the interests of both myself and the respondents, I was aware of the need to make sure that other adults were present in adjacent rooms and to leave doors slightly ajar throughout. As a result, respondent's friends or outside noises often proved slightly disruptive, calling for the need to remain both patient and centred upon the discussions at hand. The problems resulting from such disturbances actually became most frustrating at the point of transcribing interviews.

In terms of the rationale for deciding which project participants to interview, my intention was to gather as broad a range of opinion and experience as possible. I thus selected participants on the basis of variations in age, gender, time spent involved in projects and other less concrete variables based upon my participant observations (e.g., shyness/boldness, high/low in-group status, musical aptitude, degree and nature of involvement in sessions). That said, a degree of compromise was called for in this – a limited number of participants (and indeed one CM worker) proved extremely difficult to pin down for interview and some demonstrated such timidity as to considerably limit the potential utility of the interview method. Taking note of the possibility of encountering some resistance to interview, I consciously selected for first interview (at each project) those participants with whom I had already established good rapport. I hoped that these first interviewees would feed their positive experience of the interviews back to their friends and allay any concerns or reservations that the latter may have. In some situations however (particularly youth-centre settings), the difficulty of convincing young people to quit their peer group activities (such as playing football or pool, chatting or flirting) proved difficult and incentives were subsequently brought into play; I decided to use some of the research expenses to buy a number of £5 record tokens that were offered to participants as a gesture of good will. These proved almost wholly successful in their appeal, attracting all but the most resistant of respondents to participate in interviews. The use of incentives must, however, be judicious in such circumstances (see, e.g., Alderson & Morrow 2004) and it must be accompanied with assertions that there are no “right” or “wrong” answers, but that respondents must simply say what they think and believe.

### **3.3.5 Confidentiality, Consent and Ethics**

In an academic environment, through journal articles, conference papers and seminars, it is usually safe to assume that the audience will not be familiar with the specific case study settings and hence ignorant of the identities of the research participants. In such instances, maintaining the confidentiality of research participants is generally unproblematic. In collaborative research settings however, researchers may be discussing or presenting analysis and findings to individuals who are already knowledgeable about the setting and its key “players”. Confidentiality can thus become a thorny issue. While it was relatively easy to disguise the identities of some participants of the research (i.e., individual young people from large groups) it was more difficult to conceal individuals’ identities in instances where their role or the size of their participating group meant that they might be known to anyone familiar with their projects. Since the feedback from the case studies was to supplement CoMusica’s staff training and development through the dissemination of reports and hosting of seminars, there was a danger that too much explicit detail about specific project partners or CM practitioners could also reveal their identities. In this, then, it was decided that reports to The Sage Gateshead should, as far as possible, refrain from putting the practices of particular CM workers or partners under scrutiny, instead taking the responses and information gathered from young people (as well as the theoretical as well as practical issues arising from this) as the focus of attention.

For the young people participating in the study confidentiality seemed to be of low concern. Although I offered to alter the real names of participants in both my reports and in this thesis (offering young people the opportunity of choosing a pseudonym for themselves), some participants were more than happy and indeed keen that their real names be used. Despite such attitudes, all participants’ names have been changed in this piece as they were in the reports produced for The Sage Gateshead. In fact, the relative willingness of participants to be identified and have their real names used provides an indication of the degree of insouciance with which most participants approached the matter of the research project. The great majority of the interviews and discussions conducted with participants were remarkably open and easy in terms of their communicative dynamic and although some quite personal situations, opinions and

sentiments were, on occasion, expressed, little of an especially sensitive, emotive or potentially upsetting nature arose. In instances where anything of a likely upsetting nature did arise (such as one of the Byker participants referring to a friend who had recently died at a music event in Sunderland), my response, largely born of an unwillingness to venture into territory of a potentially uncertain nature, was to acknowledge the emotion being expressed (and to demonstrate my empathy) but to also seek to move on and not dwell too long on such matters.

On the whole, however, respondents were very keen to have the chance of reflecting on their relationship with music and exploring, through discussion, their thoughts and feelings about this. Some interviews, for instance, were very much like performances of a sort, during which, through talking about their relationships to music, young people were tapping into the energies and feelings associated with the various topics of discussion. One steel pan player, for instance, having been slightly reluctant to leave band practice in order to talk with me, insisted on bringing her panning sticks into the interview and tapped away with them throughout. In other instances, young people performed short raps, hummed tunes or sang the odd line of a song in order to best express their ideas and reflections. These incidents drew my attention to the difficulties young people might encounter when seeking to explain their relationships with music; as a consequence it became clear that by wording questions differently and providing opportunities for ideas to be reflected upon and responded to in different ways was one way in which some young people could best communicate their relationships with music.

Although confidentiality was of relatively low import to most of the research's participants, researchers must nonetheless remain mindful of other ethical issues when carrying out research with young people. Revelations of illegal activity (i.e., underage drinking or drug taking) require careful consideration<sup>45</sup>, reassurances need to be given regarding the privacy of any data gathered, informed consent must be sought in all

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<sup>45</sup> Although I had offered complete confidentiality to participants, I was aware that any information that might alert me to their being in danger would need to be related to appropriate adults. While some potentially harmful activities were reported to me in the course of the study (especially drug taking in the case of the Raby Street lads), the pre-existing awareness of the youth workers of these lads' recreational activities averted the need of breaking my commitment to confidentiality.

instances<sup>46</sup>, and the maxim to “do no harm” must be strictly adhered to. Undoubtedly the close proximity of other young people and familiar adults meant that, during fieldwork, numerous potentially thorny issues could be straightforwardly bypassed. That is not to say interviews and discussions necessarily always ran smoothly – frustrations, annoyances, jealousy and a range of other strong feelings could be encountered at any point – but simply that throughout the data collection practices, little resistance was encountered from young people and more often, the opportunity to express thoughts and feelings was warmly welcomed.

### **3.3.6 Transcription, Coding and Analysis**

All tape recordings of interviews were listened back to immediately following interviews. This provided an opportunity to record additional notes, take an initial perspective on the overall themes raised in the course of the interview, and recall any aspects of the interview which would not necessarily be reflected in the recordings alone (e.g., participant’s body language or other non-verbal expressions). Taped interviews were transcribed concurrently with the collection of other fieldwork materials thus allowing their import to feed into the study in an ongoing way. The coding of data was based upon a combination of the widely used methods of grounded theory (Strauss and Corbin 1997), which allows theories to emerge out of the data, along with the incorporation of “in vivo”, as well as conceptually derived codes. This involved reading and re-reading individual transcripts, combing through them systematically to look for and highlight both substantive (e.g., “music at school”) as well as more conceptually derived codes (e.g., “social relations of listening”). This also involved moving backwards and forwards between the interview data, the other data gathered and the questions guiding the research, when indexing the codes identified. This approach was adopted in order to avoid the temptation of simply “cherry picking” quotes which are not representative yet which seem to support initial assumptions. Having said that, it ought to also be recognised that it is practically impossible to read

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<sup>46</sup> Consent was sought by asking those research participants under the age of 16 to obtain the signature of a parent/guardian on a consent form (Appendix III), while participants of 16 years of age or above were asked to sign consent forms themselves. At the point of seeking consent, further information was provided about the intended purposes of the data gathered and the nature of any potential future uses.

any interview transcript without simultaneously reflecting on the theoretical premises or conceptual issues guiding the study in the first place.

Given the differences between the projects and their participants, coding categories emerging from one set of interviews did not necessarily map directly onto others. This implied the need to develop a broad perspective, capable of both accounting for the particularities of participants' differently composed *musical habitus*, while also drawing out categories of a more all-encompassing nature. The flexibility and variety of the coding categories and analytical foci adopted across case studies thus facilitated an appreciation of not only commonalities but also significant divergences in participants' approaches to music and music-related activity.

### **3.4 Case Studies**

The following section discusses the case studies selected in the course of the study. Firstly, I address the way in which and the grounds upon which the case studies were selected from amongst the CoMusica roster of CM projects. Following this, I provide an overview of some of the key features of each of the four case studies. Naturally, the information provided here will be supplemented throughout the course of subsequent chapters.

#### **3.4.1 Case Study Selection Rationale**

One of the advantages of this research being undertaken collaboratively concerns the fact that the CASE partner was able to facilitate access to a broad range of CM contexts. This had two implications for the selection of case studies. Firstly, it afforded the opportunity to develop an initial appreciation of the nature of the different participatory contexts of projects qua possible case studies. Secondly, visiting the different projects also allowed for a preliminary insight into the different outcomes in evidence across projects. On the basis of these investigations, it was clear that not only the extent but also the nature of project outcomes exhibited considerable variation. Given the range and potential for variation across the different participatory contexts, there was little scope for basing the selection of all cases upon their similarities; too few of the

CoMusica projects bore close resemblances across all of their potentially significant features.

The only way to thus begin to disentangle the inter-related factors serving to generate outcomes of different sorts would be to base the selection of cases upon what are hypothesised as the significant differentiating factors between them. The development of an initial hypothesis arose during the first year of the research project, following the community music traineeship, numerous CoMusica project visits and a grounding in the literature surround youth and musical activity. Thus, for instance, Keith Roe's work regarding the influence of school contexts and school commitment on in-school music making (Roe 1983, 1987, 1990, 1992, 1995) provided a basic framework for thinking about the processes at play within school-related settings, while Green's discussion of musical ideology and the significant differences between formal, in-formal and non-formal music making (Green 1997, 2001) made me aware of the ways in which different musical genres can adopt specific learning protocols and orthodoxies. At the same time O'Neill's work on school and gender differences in musical identities (O'Neill 1997, 2002) proved informative, as did Hargreaves' extensive work on adolescent music preferences and their relationships to a range of variables (Hargreaves 1986; Hargreaves & North 1997) and the study by Harland et al. (1995) which examines young people's uptake of opportunities for participation in arts activities.

Accompanying my growing understanding of the implications of such research work and of the practical aspects of community music activity, I also fed into my thinking a more theoretical appreciation of the potential "articulations"<sup>47</sup> and affordances involved in actors' participation in musical activity. Together, these ideas and experiences provided the basis for the development of a hypothesis that would guide my selection and investigation of cases studies.

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<sup>47</sup> "Articulation" is defined by Stuart Hall as 'the form of the connection that can make a unity of two different elements, under certain conditions. It is a linkage which is not necessary, determined, absolute and essential for all time' (Hall 1996: 141). Its utility for thinking about relationships between musical forms and practices and social structure have been highlighted by Middleton (1990), Toynbee (2000) and Hesmondhalgh (2005).



The adopted hypothesis proposed that any project's outcomes (from developing self-confidence, the learning of musical skills or the growth of social networks on to increased local community cohesion and harder measures such as the number of project participants engaged) would differ, both qualitatively and quantitatively, in relation to those aspects of young people's CM participation seen as variously salient by them. On the basis of this hypothesis, the strategy guiding the selection of case studies could be most effective if it sought both to encompass a broad variety of CM activity whilst simultaneously offering up enough by way of potentially significant similarity to justify the comparison of the variables at play within the contexts of the different cases.

In essence, the idea was to conceive of distinct projects as consisting of what Ragin (2000), in discussing diversity oriented research (i.e., research which seeks to attend to heterogeneity and difference), has referred to as a "fuzzy set" of project variables. Rather than simply positing either the presence or absence of variables (such as is typically done in Boolean analysis), fuzzy set theory permits the gradual assessment of the membership of elements in relation to a set. Viewing CM projects as composed of fuzzy sets of variables thus makes it possible to go beyond seeing cases as collections of analytically distinct variables, but rather as specific configurations of aspects and features. Since my aim was to understand the key factors operating within CM projects rich with both different types of variables and with variables which varied in terms of degree (consider, for instance, the gradation of participants' prior music making experiences), the adoption of a "configurational" approach offered an effective means of both exploring projects' independent variables and their outcomes as well as permitting the uncovering of those factors at work in determining their relative saliency.

In line with the work of the aforementioned rationale, together with my own growing appreciation of the key factors at play within CM projects, it became clear that both school-related and non-school-related projects must be sought, as must projects located within relatively affluent *and* disadvantaged local economic contexts. It would also be of value to select cases that, between them, offered similarity and variation in terms of such features as the musical genres involved, the predominant gender make-up of participants, their levels of school-commitment and prior musical experience as well as

the nature of their musical tastes and their scope. As a starting point for the development of theory concerning young people's participation in CM activities, this approach offered some scope as well as numerous dimensions along which tentative comparisons and correlations might be observed. Finally, by selecting projects at different stages in their life cycles, it would be possible to see if and how the ways projects (had) negotiated different difficulties brought any significant bearing upon their current activity.

### **3.4.2 Summary of Case Study Projects**

The final section of this chapter provides general background details about each of the four case studies followed in the course of this study; the aim is to provide the reader with an idea of the range of contextual factors which both served to influence, whilst themselves also being influenced by, the various forms of CM project participation evidenced. Specific detail regarding the participant make-up of each project as well as those relating to the precise nature of project participation (participatory contexts) will be taken up in greater depth in Chapters 4 and 5 respectively.

#### ***Raby Street Project – Byker, Newcastle Upon Tyne***

Located in the East End of inner city Newcastle Upon Tyne on the north bank of the River Tyne lies the ward of Byker. Traditionally, Byker has been a working-class area, with a large part of its male workforce still engaged in the heavy industry based around the nearby quayside until the late 1970s. With the continued decline of the docks throughout the 1980s, Byker has seen a growth in the range and extent of its social problems over the course of the last two decades, characterised by growing levels of unemployment, joyriding, burglary, hard drug use, violent crime and general youth disaffection. Byker is now recognised as suffering from a range of social problems and based on multiple indices of deprivation measures published in 2000, is the 78<sup>th</sup> most deprived ward of the 8,414 in England (DETR 2000). At the nearby Benfield School, attended by the majority of Raby Street users of secondary school age, only 26% of pupils achieved five or more GCSEs at grades A\* to C (or their equivalent) in 2004 (DFES 2005b).

The setting for this CM project was Raby Street Youth Centre, located in the very heart of Byker Wall – a 1970s housing development which brought many changes to the traditional character of the formerly terrace-lined streets of the Byker community. The centre is well established in the area and has built its good reputation over generations. Within Newcastle's youth service, the centre is generally regarded as one of the best in the East End in terms of its facilities, experienced and well-organised staff and its achievements. Raby Street also has a good balance of young and old, male and female staff that, for the most part, lives locally and has built up good relationships with the young people who use the centre. The centre is relatively well equipped for community music activities, having built up its own resource of music making equipment over the course of recent years. Taking as its lead the specific musical interests of area's young people, the centre has invested in record decks, a DJ mixer, a small purpose built DJ booth, an in-house P.A. system, several microphones and a small collection of records. These resources are supplemented by those brought along by the two CoMusica musicians who staff the project during CM sessions. In the case of the seniors (my primary interest group) these sessions took place on one evening per week and were of two hours duration.

The young people involved with this project were all-male and consisted of one group of around 10 older participants (aged between 18 and 20) who, though they had by this time ceased working with CM practitioners, continued to use the centre to congregate and play music together. A second group of younger lads (aging 13-17) formed the target group of the CM project's second phase, which coincided with my period of fieldwork in Byker. During this time I hung around, talked to, observed and interviewed members of both of these groups as well as the centre's Youth Manager and a musically-interested youth worker who had followed the project since its initiation in 2001. Full-length interviews, of between 45 minutes and 75 minutes duration, were undertaken with nine young people involved in the music making activities (five from the younger group, four from the older group), while seven shorter interviews were held with members of the younger group following their involvement in the organisation of a local music event. Although they do not feature in the results presented in this thesis, I also undertook a number of interviews with some of the girls attending the centre.

### ***SteelQuake Project – Wooler, Northumberland***

Situated at the foothills of the Cheviots on the edge of the Northumberland National Park, Wooler is an attractive, small, stone-built market town with a population of approximately two thousand. As might be guessed at from its name, Wooler's dominant industry is sheep farming and indeed, farm life provided the home background for several of the participants of this project. Wherever you are in the town it is almost impossible to lose sight of the beauty of the surrounding scenery. Based on multiple indices of deprivation measures published in 2000, Wooler is the 3919th most deprived ward of the 8,414 in England (DETR 2000).

This project is based in a converted tractor barn on the premises of Glendale Middle School, a dedicated space next to the local youth centre and close to Wooler's centre. While fundamentally adequate in many regards, the premises are far from ideal for the purposes of the project; indeed, as the period of my fieldwork was coming to a close, plans were afoot to find an alternative building in which to house the project<sup>48</sup>. The project's setting was at least familiar to all participants even if some needed to undertake journeys of up to ten miles to reach it from their homes. Of the eight young people interviewed in Wooler, only one lived within easy walking distance of the local middle school. This implied a need for band members' parents to organise transport to and from the project, for their children. Participants of this project attended either Glendale Middle School or had recently left to attend The Duchess's Community High School in Alnwick (where 58% of pupils achieved five or more GCSEs at grades A\* to C or their equivalents in 2004 (DFES 2005c)).

The SteelQuake project retains exclusive access to its music making resources and the space in which they are kept. The instruments consist of approximately 40 steel pans of differing sizes and specificities (tenors, seconds, double seconds, guitars, bass). The

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<sup>48</sup> There were several reasons for this. Firstly, in and of themselves the premises were not exactly ideal (principally they lack running water, toilets and adequate heating in winter – it is only by virtue of the converted tractor barn's proximity to the local youth centre that numerous practical problems could be negotiated). Secondly, since the three-tier education system adopted in Northumberland was undergoing review at the time of fieldwork, it was uncertain whether or not Glendale Middle School would be in a position to continue to offer the use of this converted barn at all.

project also uses a drum kit (purchased from one of its participants) as well as several irons and other small percussion instruments. Having begun in earnest at in April 2001, at the time of writing this CoMusica project has been running in something approximating its current form for roughly five and a half years. Today the project is comprised of two participating groups: SteelQuake proper, composed of 16 young people of between eight and 14 years of age and The Tremors, a group of around six youngsters all aged between seven and 12 years of age. This overlap in age groupings reflects the way band membership at this project depends more upon musical experience and level of ability than it does age per-se (though naturally the two are connected). Two community musicians work with the project participants and CM sessions for SteelQuake take place twice a week lasting for three hours on each occasion.

In this case study, my attention focussed exclusively on the members of the older band. A total of eight participants of the SteelQuake band were interviewed (three girls and five boys). In terms of their ages and genders, the make-up of this group of eight was reflective of the composition of the whole band. In addition, the project's lead CM practitioner was interviewed, as was one band member's parent – a close aide to the project and a key member of its parent-youth committee.

### ***Galafield Project – Newbiggin Hall, Newcastle***

Newbiggin Hall estate is a predominantly social housing estate built in the 1950s and 1960s; it is located in the outer suburbs of Newcastle Upon Tyne, four miles to the north west of the city centre. With around 4,300 households (of which approximately 70% are rented from the local authority), this is one of the largest council housing estates in England. It is located in the ward of Woolsington which ranked 436<sup>th</sup> most deprived ward in England according to the multiple indices of deprivation published in 2000. As this figure suggests, the area is affected by a host of social problems, many of which impact severely upon its young people:

The lack of facilities, especially for the youngsters, has been a recurring problem since the development of the estate. Linked to this, vandalism, petty theft, anti-social behaviour, rioting and arson were also recurrent, alimented by diminishing employment opportunities and distance from Newcastle city centre.

(Hull & Coaffee 2001: 3)

The setting for this case study changed during the course my time with this project. The original project setting was that of Galafield Play and Youth Centre (the project is hereafter referred to as the “Galafield” project), a £1.3 million, Single Regeneration Budget-funded youth centre located within the Newbiggin Hall estate and opened in May 2001. Despite the high degree of funding invested in the centre, there is a feeling from local residents and youth workers alike that subsequent funding has failed to keep pace, resulting in a lack of staffing time and an under-exploitation of the centre’s facilities. The centre works on a subscription basis and was, during the period of fieldwork, over subscribed. CM activities had been ongoing at the centre since it first opened. As well as an in-house radio station, Galafield has its own set of record decks and associated paraphernalia (speakers, amplifier, etc.). These were used to support the musical activities of the centre’s lads. The female-oriented CM sessions, which formed the focus of this case study, began by seeking to support music activities of girls aged between 11 and 13, using a laptop computer equipped with music software to encourage song writing and singing. This series of sessions came to an end when the lead CM worker moved on. Since then, a new lead CM worker had been appointed and the timing of music activities had shifted outside of regular youth centre sessions. During fieldwork, the girls group was composed of an average of just four girls, all aged between 13 and 15.

Approximately half way through the period of fieldwork the setting of the girls’ strand shifted to the nearby Kenton School (a comprehensive secondary school where 53% of pupils attained five or more GCSE grades A\* to C or their equivalent in 2004 (DFES 2005d)). Sessions taking place at the school – which was being attended by three of the project’s four participants at this time – were held in the classroom of the school’s music teacher. The school offers numerous music-making facilities; the classroom used for CM activities contained a piano, keyboards, a music cupboard with guitars and

amplifiers and some percussion instruments. These sessions were of 90 minutes duration and the staff involved in their provision consisted of the CM project leader, two CM trainee workers and a youth worker from the Galafield Centre. Three of the four girls involved were interviewed at length (one failed to attend numerous pre-arranged interviews) as was the project's lead community musician and its supporting youth worker.

### ***“Canusingit” Project – Redcar Community College***

The Borough of Redcar & Cleveland is located on the east coast of Northern England, to the south of the River Tees. The urban settlement of Redcar was originally built up to serve the iron, steel and shipbuilding industries that developed around the Tees Estuary. Despite the decline of the traditional shipbuilding industry, the south bank of the Tees has retained its industrial base and continues to be a major centre of employment for the Borough. Redcar Community College is a comprehensive school located on the outskirts of the borough's largest town, Redcar (population 33,000). Based on Multiple Indices of Deprivation measures published in 2000, Kirkleatham (the ward within which the school is based) ranks 204th most deprived ward of the 8,414 wards in England (DETR 2000).

Shortly before my fieldwork began at Redcar, the school had achieved “specialist visual and performing arts” status. The 956-pupil school was thus undergoing several changes during the period of fieldwork, seeking to build on its success in engaging students with arts-based work while also hoping to encourage further improvements in results as had been witnessed over recent years (pupil's achievement in A\* to C grades at GCSE leapt from 21% in 2000, to 44% by 2004 (DFES 2005e)). Several other arts-based projects were on-going within the school during the period of fieldwork including Brazilian drumming classes, a large-scale opera project (in collaboration with Northern Stage) and lunchtime guitar lessons, organised by one of the school's non-music teachers. None of these coincided with CM activity.

Effectively the project at Redcar can be conceived of as two distinct sets of music making activities that collaborated on an occasional basis. One strand of the project was

composed of an average of eight female participants (aged 12 to 14). Focusing predominantly on singing activities, this group made use of little by way of music making equipment beyond the piano located in the schools' music classroom wherein the sessions took place. The second group of project participants was composed of between three and five lads (aged 14 to 16) who concentrated their efforts on largely self-determined music work in a "rock band" format (guitar, drums, bass, vocals) in the room adjoining the aforementioned music room. The school here provided the young people involved with access to a few amplifiers and a tattered drum kit that served adequately the purposes of this group in their rehearsal and jamming activities. Late into the period of my fieldwork, a further community musician joined the lads' strand of the project and facilitated the recording of several band demos. Prior to this, CoMusica had provided the project with two principal CM workers plus a varying number of trainee community musicians (three on average) all of whom worked with the girls group. The two strands of this project have collaborated on several occasions, combining the girls singing with the lads' rock music in their performances – for the most part, however, the groups' activities can be seen as distinct. CM sessions at this project took place once a week directly after school and lasted for 90 minutes. In addition to the after school youth-based CM sessions, CM practitioners also run a successful lunchtime singing group for school staff. Interviews at Redcar were carried out with eight young people (three lads and five girls), the two lead CM workers and their key contact at the school, the deputy head.



## CHAPTER 4: FORMATIONS OF *MUSICAL HABITUS*

### 4.1 Introduction

Whenever I've got a spare moment, you know, I'm either at school or listening to music or I'm playing music on some instrument which I play, you know, that's all I ever do really. Music is erm, I read about music you know, music is, it's my escape from, from anything, you know? If I'm annoyed I'll just go and sit and listen to music and everything just, I dunno, it's just very important to me you know, it's one of those things that doesn't go away, it's not like something where they get a new, better one. Just listen to music and there it is, that's music.

(Alex, SteelQuake, age 14)

Alex has been playing the double seconds in the SteelQuake band for the last two and a half years. He joined the band, he tells me, before he'd really developed a sense of his own musical tastes. His attitude towards music and playing back then wasn't particularly precious; he enjoyed playing music so he just "let it come really". Nowadays he plays a lot of music and listens practically every chance he gets. He's discovered steel pan music and Trinidadian "souka" through his involvement with SteelQuake but his real passion, he confides, lies in 70s rock music. "you know like ACDC and Iron Maiden that no one likes anymore cos its old...its much more sort of simple and sort of straight down...not sort of fancy". He reads Kerrang magazine (a weekly rock music publication), watches rock videos on TV and recognises how his fandom has affected him in ways ranging from the way he dresses to what he thinks about war. Its not that he's totally averse to the more modern types of music that most of his school friends listen to, he just finds that

It's all the same really, you know, every song is "my girlfriend left me" and all that shit, done in the simplest way possible, and so simple it's bad, you know?

(Alex, SteelQuake, age 14)

Yes, Alex has his own tastes, but he's not precious anymore: "I used to be real narrow minded". Now that his dad doesn't live at home any more, when he does get to see him, he and Alex spend a fair bit of time listening to music together. So what if dad plays him loads of soul music – the point, he says, is that they both "appreciate what they're listening to". As much as the family wasn't a particularly musical one when he was

growing up (no instruments in the home, just the radio and some records), Alex recognises how some things appeared to get more approval than others:

Yeah, you know, my parents, my parents and my family are very, very proud...they like the way that I'm interested in music and not football and other stuff, they like me to do artistic things and that's great.

(Alex, SteelQuake, age 14)

He'd always been creative, writing stories, drawing, then painting (he's synaesthetic), and had always been involved in music learning at school, taking lessons in singing, saxophone and drums. Still, music wasn't really all that big a deal until he hit his early teens; until then, it was just another activity that he did. The real turning point, he says, came one summer on holiday in Greece when his older cousins played him some rock music. He told them he liked it so one of them made him a tape. Not long after he was thinking "I'm gonna get this on CD". Though he was already learning steel pans by then, music still hadn't seized his interest to the extent that it has now. Today Alex is a section leader in the SteelQuake band and when we spoke, was in the process of getting a rock band together with some friends. He'd give his hind teeth be a professional musician when he gets older.

Lisa's musical world has taken a different route. We first met at one of the CoMusica Gatherings where, along with three other girls from the Galafield Youth Centre, she was to perform their song "Love" – a paean to teenage male-female relations set in a bathroom on a housing estate in suburban Newcastle. It doesn't take great insight to recognise what it is that the girls are referring to in this song; politely put, they're keen on certain boys. "Holidays and boys", that's what their songs are mostly about. Soon after, Lisa had gone off "Love". "Its crap", and performing it was "embarrassing".

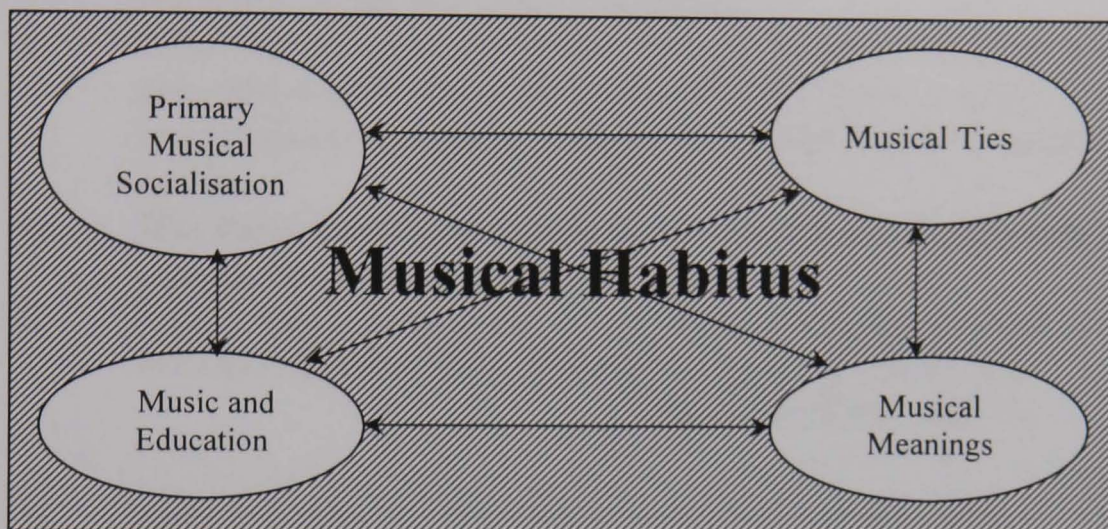
Thanks in large part to her candidness, I soon got to find out much more about Lisa's take on music. For one thing, spending huge amounts of time listening to music was not for her: "when I get in [home from school] for about an hour", and usually as a background to other activities. Friends were the main source of her musical influences. They gave her "afterdark" tapes (a style of rave music also referred to as "new monkey"

by other interviewees), and liked similar stuff to her in the main. She and her mates followed the pop charts quite closely and she told me how she liked the new single by “Michelle” (the then latest winner of TV’s “Pop Idol” series), as well as Christina Aguilera and Darius (a previous Pop Idol contender). “Why the big fascination with Pop Idol?” I asked: “I like listening to how bad people are at singing, and I like to see who wins.” I took a videocassette full of pop videos down to the youth centre to watch the reactions of the girls in the Galafield group. They seemed to enjoy the experience – chewing up and spitting out the latest pop stars. Nelly Furtado? “A hippy”. Kelis? “Slapper!”. Ronan Keating? “Just crap”. One particular pop-dance anthem had a few of them dancing up on the chairs though. At home? No, Lisa couldn’t stand the Dolly Parton records her mum played – the latter didn’t seem to care much for what her daughter did with music either (as with Alex, Lisa’s dad no longer lives at home). She found music at school to be a pretty dull affair these days, though when she was younger she had played trumpet, French horn, tenor horn, recorder, keyboard and violin. So how come she showed so little interest in playing music in CM sessions? “I know a bit of music but I think its quite boring writing the notes, it’s boring”. Of far more interest than playing with sounds, is writing lyrics for songs and the idea of making a music video. “Just try and have a laugh, y’know?”

How is it that one young person becomes a restless enthusiast of music, while another sees it largely as a focus for a collective cult of humiliation? The case I make in this chapter argues that such musical attitudes are not solely the product of individual tastes, peer pressure and family background but can also be traced to the complete set of social relations (encompassing primary musical socialization, musical education, musical ties and various forms of musical meaning) that I have termed the *musical habitus*. This *musical habitus* is instrumental in constructing personal music-related identities, forging emotional relations and directing numerous other aspects of actors’ whole relationship with music and music-related activities. My brief in this chapter is to explore the variable influences upon and effects of the *musical habitus*, looking to account for the ways in which the *musical habitus* variably opens out onto opportunities, sets constraints, responds to broader social structures or results from contingencies.

In order to address these issues, a series of explanatory investigations need to be undertaken; these correspond to those processes posited as formative of the *musical habitus* (outlined in Chapter 2 and presented again in Figure 4.1, below). In what follows I address each of the four main themes in turn, seeking, at each step, to assess the presence of trends informative of what Bourdieu referred to as the ‘procedures to follow, paths to take’ (Bourdieu, 1990: 53).

Figure 4.1 – Formation of *musical habitus*



#### 4.2 Primary Musical Socialisation - Analysis

The idea of primary musical socialisation concerns musical experiences and interactions gained by children and young people in a way unmediated by the education system (the latter is dealt with in the next section). As such, the domain of the home provides the setting for the large part of these musical encounters and family members are implicated as primary relations. Primary musical socialisation serves to set precedents for young people’s conceptualisations of music (here I include music listening and music-making as well as involvement in other music-related activities), providing them with a significant first picture of what, in music, is to be seen as acceptable, valuable, desirable and appropriate to them and others like them. Significant elements of this early picture might thus include the responses of children’s significant others to musical phenomena and the degree to which and ways in which these are manipulated or willed.

The accounts presented below typically represent participants’ responses to my queries about the musicality of their families, of the home as a space of musical experience and the broader significance of music during early childhood. With this in mind, let us first



examine the ways in which the participants of the Raby Street project talked about their primary musical socialisation.

Regarding simple use of music and listening habits in the home, the following accounts were quite typical of this group of respondents:

M<sup>49</sup> Erm, so when you were little, what kind of music was about you, you know, when you were growing up?

R What kind of music did I like then or...? Just normal pop music then, just what I listened to on Top of the Pops or something, coz I never really listened to it then...there was no sort of music for us then.

M Was there much music in the house when you were growing up? I mean, was your family into music?

R Nah, it was just my sister, my older sister she just listened to like her kind of music, likes of Christina Aguilera and all that.

(Tony, Raby Street, age 15)

M Erm, was there much music around when you were little?

R Nah, can't remember

M Say, erm...

R Chart music, but that's about it I think.

(James, Raby Street, age 20)

M And what about at home, was there much music going on there?

R Nah.

(Mark, Raby Street, age 19)

It appeared that, few, if any, of the music-related activities experienced in the home during childhood held any great significance for most of the Raby Street project participants. Where there were instances of musical taste being exercised by family members, these typically involved little more discrimination than the choice of a radio station or a TV channel that played commercial, popular music. The most common exceptions concerned older brothers and sisters who were occasionally portrayed as musically interested to differing degrees. In the case of sisters, respondents would typically append a cursory desultory comment about the nature of pop music; in the case of older brothers (more typically devotees of dance/techno/rave forms of music),

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<sup>49</sup> "M" is used throughout to indicate my speech in interview excerpts. "R" indicates the speech of respondents.

more positive musical role models were described. Much more rare amidst these reports, was talk of musically interested parents or other significant adults.

Could it really be the case that so few of the adults around these young men were actively interested in music in any way? Considering this question, the responses of some of the lads (especially the older ones) concerning the way they envisaged their future relationship with music, warrant mention:

- M Do you think you'll carry on buying records and DJing or will you just kind of, I know it's hard to say...
- R Ahh, nah, I think it'll fade out soon.
- M Will you keep getting into music though, will you stay into it?
- R I'll still keep my decks and everything but I doubt that I'll play them very often.

(James, Raby Street, age 20)

I divvn't knaa [don't know] if I'll stick getting involved in it myself, at the minute like I'm really just not bothered about like myself, y'knaa?

(Steve, Raby Street, age 19)

It seemed that while during adolescence and young manhood music-related activities are seen as perfectly appropriate by the lads at Raby Street, as they move further into adulthood, the picture alters considerably and some kind of lapse in musical interest, both at the level of listening and more significantly at the level of playing or practicing, is assumed. It might be presumed then, that as these young men go on to raise families of their own, such a cycle (whereby musical activity is seen as relevant and appropriate to youth but not adulthood) will continue to a greater or lesser extent. Undoubtedly of some relevance to this situation is the fact that the music form to which most of the boys expressed their almost exclusive adherence was, itself, seen as something tied up closely with adolescence:

- R It's youngsters that like it, old men don't listen to it in their cars, it's just all youngsters that listen to it.
- M So you think people grow out of it?
- R Aye, I think people do.

(Brian, Raby Street, age 14)

R        You just grow out of it, yeah...  
(Tony, Raby Street, age 15)

Effectively then, holding onto an idea of “good” or worthwhile musical experience that relates, almost exclusively, to a style intimately connected to adolescence, it was difficult to see how the lads might envisage future musical pathways for themselves beyond their teenage years. Further insight into this situation can be gleaned from the evidence relating to childhood experiences of music making and musical instrument playing in the home. Here, across the whole of the Raby Street project interviews, there was not a single reported instance of music making during participants’ childhood by significant adults and only one participant could cite the presence of a “traditional” musical instrument in the home. In the two cases (out of a total of eight) where Raby Street participants did recall childhood music-related experiences with greater affection, enthusiastic and musically interested parents were at the centre of these accounts. Of the two young men at Raby Street of whom this was true, both had gone on to begin learning a traditional musical instrument, both expressed more varied tastes than their peers, and both envisaged music continuing to play a part in their lives as they grew older. While one of these young men, whose father was an avid record collector and Beatles fan, went on to play violin at primary school, the second enthusiastically offered the following account of the situation:

M        So have you got a musical family at all?  
R        Aye, me Maa [mother] loves music, me Daa [father] loves music, I love music, I mean everyone's gotta love music man, it's the big thing music, man.  
M        Yeah? Are they like, did they perform at all, were they ever performers?  
R        Naw, naw, [no, no] not performers.  
M        Did anyone ever play a musical instrument?  
R        Just me really like, when I was little, when I used to play guitar for a bit.  
M        Yeah? How did you get into that?  
R        Aww, I was at primary school, and the vicar used to come down and do assemblies and just said, said does anyone wanna take guitar lessons and I knew I had a guitar at the house, well me Dad's, it was a bit broke like but I got the strings fixed and erm, I ended up getting taught off the vicar.

(Dave, Raby Street, age 16)

For Dave, the confluence of musically interested parents and the presence of a musical instrument in the home, together with the offer of tuition, provided the conditions supporting his uptake of instrument learning. Though it is arguable as to whether or not this would have occurred had any of these conditions been lacking, his parents' enthusiasm for music and their (presumably related) ownership of a guitar do appear to have created the kind of opportunity for Dave's musical activity that were absent for the great majority of young men at Raby Street. Indeed, the attitudes held by the majority of Raby Street participants towards the playing or learning of traditional musical instruments were largely marked by a sense of either the alien or the risibly inappropriate: as 20 year-old James told me: "I divvn't knaa [don't know] about musical instruments, I've never played one before."

Though there was scant evidence of traditional musical instrument use within the homes and families of Raby Street participants, it is worth briefly noting several reports of the ownership and use of record decks, mixers and other sound manipulation equipment by family members (principally older brothers and young uncles). For the young men in question, there tended to be greater familiarity and ease with these technologies and the forms of music employing them were, in the main, more highly regarded. Interestingly, in the following excerpts, the values inscribed in the lads' musicality can be seen to fall very much in line with attitudes usually brought to the manipulation of traditional musical instruments; here the record decks, mixer, fader and so on, are very much seen as musical instruments in their own right:

as a DJ you've got to sort of catch the beats as well and drop it in, but with erm, instruments it's the same, coz like if someone's, you know, say on a violin or summat, then the drums have got to come in, so you've got to come in right, in time.

(Brian, Raby Street, age 14)

DJing takes, it does, it takes a lot of skill to do it, lot of hard work...

(James, Raby Street, age 20)

Well, with decks you're playing an instrument aren't you, you're making music...

(Mark, Raby Street, 19)



Given the extent to which the CM activities undertaken at Raby Street varied from those of the SteelQuake project, would there be a commensurate variation in experiences of primary musical socialisation for these two groups of young people?

M     What about erm, listening, like when you grew up, in the house, was there always lots of music around?

R     Yes, there was, I think, early on.

(Rebecca, SteelQuake, age 12)

M     Was there much music around when you were younger and what kind of music was it?

R     Yeah, there was. My mum was always taking me to piano lessons and drum kit lessons so I've done a lot of piano, theory and drums.

M     Really? Since when?

R     Since, well, [age] eight.

(Craig, SteelQuake, age 14)

R     Well, erm, my Grannie had been in opera for a long time and than Granddad got into it when they got married so, I was always over there where they lived so I suppose I got quite into music there...

(Alice, SteelQuake, age 12)

On the whole, SteelQuake participants reported more numerous, more varied and more significant experiences with music during early years and at home than was the case for the Raby Street project participants. These musical experiences took a number of forms; while just over half of the participants spoke of parents with an interest in listening to specific types of music (as with the two Raby Street participants mentioned above), of these, several also recalled the presence of musical instruments in the home, while others related a high level of parental encouragement to participate in various musical activities. For this latter group, greater familiarity with musical instruments and knowledge of music theory was also in evidence. Indeed, as is indicated in the following excerpt by Alice, who, together with her younger brother, provides the SteelQuake band with its most prodigious musical talent, the significance of the family (as musical milieu) in determining the type of musical activities subsequently engaged in, can be great:

- M OK. And what about on your Dad's side, did he play very much music at all?
- R Yeah he's sort of into an acoustic guitar sort of thing. that's why \*BROTHER\*<sup>50</sup> plays guitar, because of that.
- M There's kind of a music thing going on there then, I mean, how about, what was around the house, were there a lot of instruments?
- R Yes, my Mum played the piano so there was always a piano and when I was seven I started to learn how to play the piano so...
- (Alice, SteelQuake, age 12)

While only a few of the SteelQuake participants reported instances of parents teaching them music theory or instrument playing in the home, the relative presence or lack of parental interest and support in primary musical socialisation emerged as influential upon the musical activities subsequently taken up by adolescents across all CM projects; as a general rule, the effect of musically interested and supportive parents was to validate or normalise what can be considered “legitimate” music activities for their children, engendering in them a sense of ease and naturalness which opened out onto a willingness to seize a broader range of musical opportunities than was generally true of those with less musically interested parents. The nature of these intergenerational interactions, did however, take on a different flavour within their different contexts. That is, variously expressed parental musical interests could be seen to influence a range of dimensions of young people's subsequent music-related activity. One example of such a process emerged in the way participants recognised the links between the forms of expression and content of their own musical tastes and those of their parents:

- M Are you still buying [records] now?
- R More and more ACDC.
- M Really? Just building up a big stash of ACDC?
- R Yeah. My Dad's got the whole collection.
- M So why are you going out buying them?
- R Cos I want my own collection.
- (Sam, Redcar, age 14)

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<sup>50</sup> Asterisks around words such as \*BROTHER\* are used throughout to indicate instances where participants have used individuals' names.

In other cases, non-musical, yet nonetheless supportive parents provided young people with opportunities for the uptake of music playing and learning:

- M And how come you play guitar?  
R Cos when I was little I liked erm, Natalie Imbruglia, her song “Torn” and it was like all, basically all you could hear was the guitar and I really liked that song so that's when me Ma [Mum] got us [me] a guitar.

(Caroline, Galafield, age 13)

A further common trend saw the nature of the musical tastes inherited from parents serving to provide young people entry into specific musical “worlds”. Thus Matthew’s father’s love of rock music and the associated ownership of an electric guitar come to be taken up wholesale by Matthew, effectively maintaining something of a family legacy:

Erm, it was our Dad really got us into music erm, he influenced us with a lot of old rock, you know, the good stuff, and I liked it and then one summer, in the summer holidays, I had nothing to do and I was really bored and I found his old guitar under the eaves upstairs in the attic and I picked it out and I just learnt, I just picked it up and learnt it.

(Matthew, Redcar, age 16)

Parental interest and support in musical endeavours can also be influential when it is conspicuous by its absence. To recall, Lisa, whose story was detailed earlier in the chapter, found music playing and writing “boring” despite having acquired a good level of instrument playing experience at school. In the following exchange, the terseness of Lisa’s responses appeared to belie a distinct lack of encouragement and validation for previous musical endeavours on the part of her significant others:

- M What about musical instruments and that kind of thing, is there any one musical around your family?  
R [shakes head] Not really  
M Has anyone ever tried to teach you any music at home or...?  
R [shakes head]  
M Encouraged you to be musical?  
R No.

(Lisa, Galafield, age 13)

Where such validation was lacking in young people's accounts, there appeared to be a commensurate lack of confidence and interest in the actual physical playing of musical notes, rhythms, etc. – in manipulating the basic building blocks of music – in ways unmediated by technologies designed to “short cut” the music making process. In addition to Lisa, this was true of several other participants of the Galafield project and might also be said to apply to the majority of the young men at Raby Street.

The above point recalls to our attention Bourdieu's point that actors' habitus reside in and are expressed as much through bodily states and attitudes as mental ones. In contrast to Lisa, her co-participant in the Galafield project, Elizabeth – a much more confident singer and performer of music, and someone who appeared to benefit from CM participation more than did her co-participants – describes how her sense of parental validation for musical activity involves shared practices delivered through the body:

- R     Yes, we [Elizabeth and her mother] both know songs and that  
          and so we just sing  
M     Does she listen to modern music then?  
R     Yeah she likes loads of stuff that I listen to, she likes all that but  
          she still likes loads of old stuff as well  
M     Right, so you influence her as much as she influences you?  
R     Yeah

(Elizabeth, Galafield, age 14)

Elizabeth here also echoes Alex from SteelQuake in the way she details a child-parent musical relationship based upon shared enjoyment and reciprocity. This matter of parental validation and involvement appears to be of some subsequent import; when placed alongside the much more musically schooled Lisa's attitude towards music making, Elizabeth can be described as exhibiting far greater creativity, confidence and determination. In the case of most respondents, and, it must be recognised, in a number of different ways, the correspondence between parental support and validation and the attitudes subsequently brought to music making by young people does form something of a consistent thread. Bourdieu's emphasis upon primary socialisation in the formation of habitus thus appears to be reflected in the ways primary musical socialisation impacts upon the *musical habitus*.

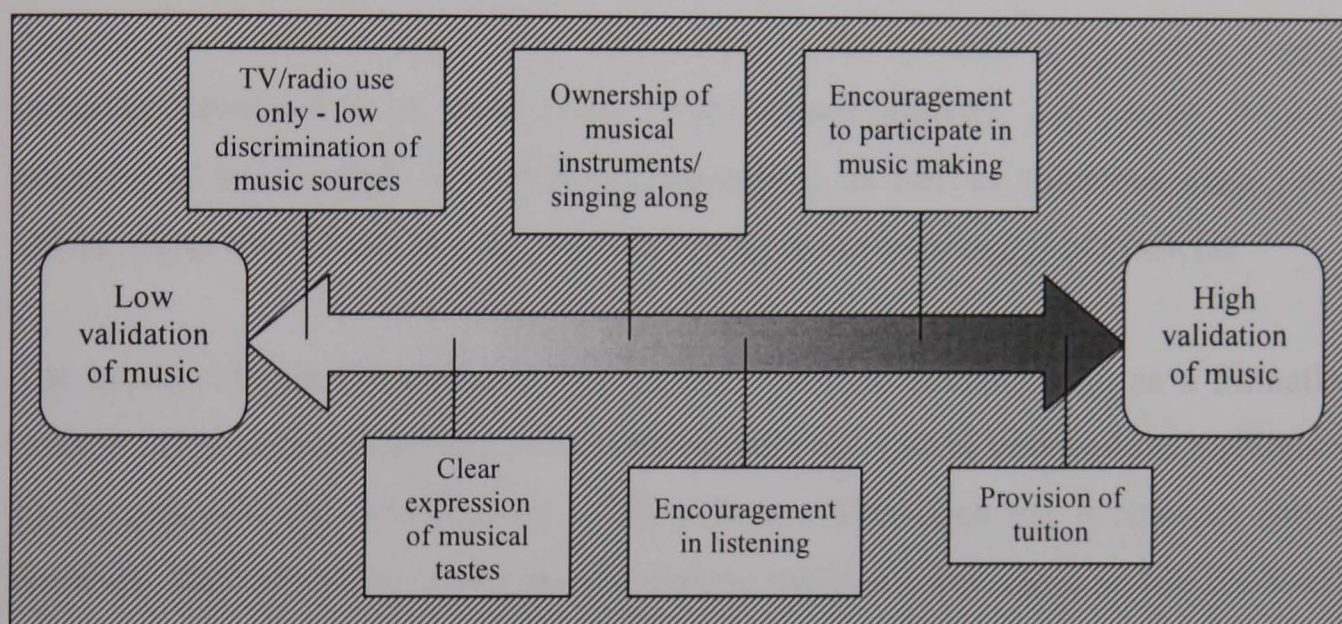
That said, while true of almost all of the young people involved in the study, the situation described above did not necessarily apply to all in the same way. The testimony of SteelQuake's Samantha, for instance, also spoke of a low level of parental interest and validation in musical activities coupled with little support for Samantha's current efforts. Yet in spite of this, Samantha practiced and played a full part in SteelQuake. Indeed, although other band members occasionally teased her about the quality of her playing (her knowledge of musical theory was thinner and her playing less precise than that of other band members), she persisted in her efforts and gained a great deal from band membership in both personal and musical terms. So what differentiates Samantha from those young people at Galafield and Raby Street? Undoubtedly, the peer group context was significant in this regard; while participants' peer groups saw musical instrument playing as of low significance and value at both Raby Street and Galafield, in Wooler the situation was quite different – Samantha's friends played musical instruments and she had tried to learn clarinet herself until she found that "no matter how hard I tried I still couldn't play it" (Samantha, SteelQuake, age 14). Samantha's situation thus alerts our attention to the multiple influences of social contexts upon young people's *musical habitus* and of the potential for one type of effect (e.g., peer validation) to override another (e.g., lack of parental support) within given situations.

From the above accounts, the hypothesis that primary musical socialisation serves to provide parameters for subsequent adolescent musical activity appears to have some validity. One of the most powerful ways in which primary musical socialisation appears to function concerns the validation of various sorts of musical experiences by significant others. Emerging from the above accounts is what might be seen as a continuum of music validation. At one end of the continuum, characterised by a low validation of music, we find parents and significant others' attachment to music typified by the relatively passive and indiscriminating use of a radio or TV as music sources. Moving from here towards that end of the continuum characterised by higher levels of music validation and use, we find parents or significant others owning and playing records, CDs, etc., in accordance with their tastes. This situation consists of a child



being exposed to instances in which significant others engage in a more active manipulation of sonic materials. As we progress along the continuum we find the instances of musical engagement characterised by adults singing (and singing along to music), owning musical instruments and, moving further along, playing musical instruments in the home. That end of the continuum characterised by the greatest validation of music sees the child being actively encouraged to listen to music and participate in musical making activities (through, for example, the purchase of an instrument) and, beyond this, through the provision of one-to-one guidance and tuition. This continuum is presented in a simplified form in Figure 4.2 below.

Figure 4.2 – Continuum of Parental Validation of Musical Activity.



As much as the validation of different forms of musical activity and experience appears significant for the subsequent musical paths followed by young people, to view the matter exclusively in terms of relative degrees of validation would be to present only a partial picture. There are two reasons for this: the first, as we shall explore more below, concerns the other factors capable of influencing young people's music-related decisions. The second is that an exclusive focus on the simple *fact* or *extent* of validation provides inadequate detail about precisely *which* relatively validated aspects of musical experience we are dealing with – a crucial point in any attempt to disentangle variously configured *musical habitus* and their import for CM project participation.

Thus, for example, while both Matthew from Redcar and Alice from the SteelQuake project grew up in home environments where musical activity was highly validated, the forms of music receiving validation were very different in each case. The repercussions of these differences in musical form are considerable, not only in terms of the avenues subsequently afforded for their extension within educational settings, but also in terms of the types of social relations implied and the meanings deriving from each specific musical activity. That the significant aspects of Matthew's devotion to "classic rock" do not map straightforwardly onto Alice's world of music examinations and qualifications must alert us to the great variety inherent in differently validated sorts of musical experience and activity. Such variations concern not only the matter of whether music and musical activities come to be seen as valid or worthwhile but also the specific dimensions of musical experience which come to be considered by young people as primarily constitutive of good music/music-related activity, the nature of listener positions to be adopted<sup>51</sup> in specific circumstances, as well as numerous other sorts of valuations as they relate, at a foundational level, to the *meaning(s)* of music(s).

The upshot of this discussion is that primary musical socialisation, as a formation process of the *musical habitus*, does seem to carry the sort of implications highlighted by Bourdieu in the development of the habitus. This does not necessarily imply, however, that only those young people gaining musical experiences within the family come to see musical activity or CM participation as "thinkable". Young people can, it seems, make such a step through either developing an affinity for particular musical meanings (such in the case of many young people at Raby Street) or else through responding well to initial experiences of CM participation, which they subsequently sustain (in such cases as Samantha at SteelQuake). To further explore the usefulness of the concept of *musical habitus*, the underlying patterns revealed above need to be placed within the context of the child's broadening experiences. To this end, I shall now turn to examine the role played by experiences of music gained in educational settings.

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<sup>51</sup> Here we might consider how, for example, the conventional listening positions associated with experiences of listening to classical music on CD or vinyl – calling for stillness and attention – as opposed to the experience of pop music through a transistor radio – often related to singing, humming or moving *along to* the music, accumulate, after repeated childhood exposure, into varying conceptualisations of the foundations of musical appreciation.

### 4.3 Music and Education - Analysis

R     music at High School's been great...it's not like a lesson, it's freedom.

(Alex, SteelQuake, age 14)

R     I hate the likes of music what I did at school.

M     Did you? What was it like?

R     Boring, you just write, and if you did get an instrument it's just a flute and it's just, it's no good.

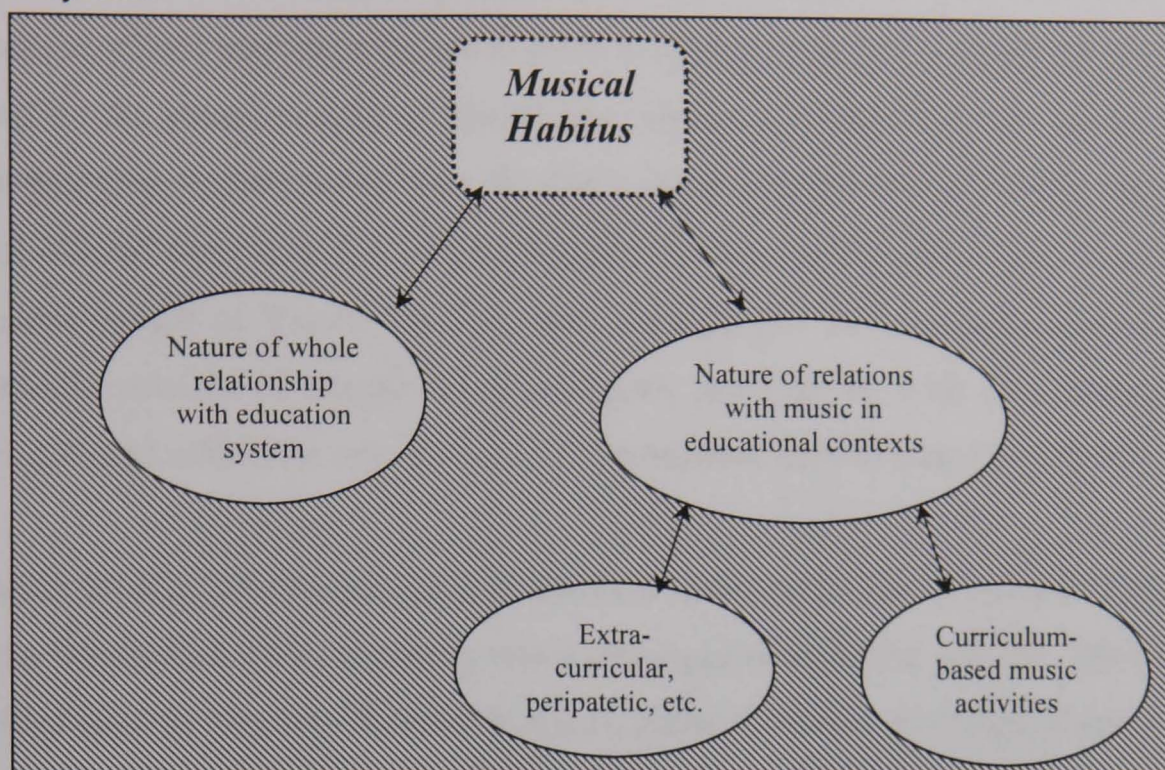
(Tony, Raby Street, age 15)

While project participants' experiences of primary musical socialisation illustrated some quite marked divergences, the ways actors' variously disposed *musical habitus* responded to musical activities within educational settings elicited reactions of a much more starkly conflicting nature. In this section I firstly survey the breadth of opinion offered by young people, before moving on to posit the presence of any trends and patterns. Finally, I shall examine connections between the findings presented here with those emerging from the previous section.

To recall from Chapter 2, there exist several primary relations between the *musical habitus* and experiences of music gained within educational contexts (see Figure 4.3). Following Bourdieu's rationale, we can expect actors' relationships with music, as it is encountered within the education system, to function in ways corresponding to their *whole* relationship with that system. Specifically, and based on previous research findings (Roe 1983, 1987, 1992, 1995), the role of what was termed "school-commitment" was posited as being of primary significance in determining the nature of educational experiences of music, largely by virtue of young people's whole relationship with educational environments. With these suppositions in mind, let us move on to examine the experiences and attitudes towards music and education reported by CM project participants.



Figure 4.3 – Principle Relations between *Musical Habitus* and Educational System



In the case of the SteelQuake participants interviewed, virtually all of whom were achieving well academically and expressed commitment to school in a variety of ways (prioritising school work, involvement in extra-curricular activities), very positive experiences of music playing and learning in educational settings were generally related.

- R Music at school...I enjoy that more than almost any lesson...it's always practical work you know, we always get to compose and do improvisations and things which is, which is great you know, you get to work and make up our own pieces of music, which I think is brilliant and err, I'm taking music for GCSE...  
(Alex, SteelQuake, 14)

- R A lot of time is spent doing composition and I just really enjoy composition and the performances, you just get a practice performance, which I tend to already have a performance since I have steel pan, so I get even more time for composition.  
(Craig, SteelQuake, 14)

In the case of those SteelQuake participants who had not already experienced music learning or playing in the home (roughly half of those interviewed), educational settings provided a entry point to a variety of music learning experiences. Thus while Rebecca

reported the encouragement of her teacher and the provision of access to a piano as key factors in her decision to take up lessons, for Alex, a concert hosted and organised by his middle school inspired a desire to learn saxophone. In fact, judging by the accounts offered by the young people of SteelQuake, particularly significant in the provision of music learning opportunities was Wooler's local Middle School<sup>52</sup>. The fact that the school offered such a variety of good quality musical opportunities and experiences to the young people of Wooler (in ways that, for example, may not have been the case at the middle schools of neighbouring villages), provides us with one example of the contingency to which the development of the *musical habitus* may be subject<sup>53</sup>.

Glendale Middle School provided all musical instruments for the practical and theory lessons undertaken with peripatetic tutors (arranged through the school). These included activities such as singing (Thomas & Alex), piano (Rebecca & Craig), drums (Thomas, Jake & Craig), guitar, accordion, flute as well as a variety of other traditional string and woodwind instruments. In some cases, experiences gained in an educational setting led on to further important experiences:

Me and someone done [did] singing, me and Alex, he's in this band as well, like we got a bursary, we won a bursary in the first school like, so we got singing lessons and like half of them got paid by the school cos we're good singers, me and Alex and erm, we did like little concerts...

(Thomas, SteelQuake, age 14)

Having found their musical interests and dispositions well catered for within educational contexts, the majority of SteelQuake interviewees had subsequently gone on, or were planning to go on to gain formal recognition for their skills and knowledge through GCSE music study. At the same time, for those teenagers moving on from the Middle School, further music opportunities continued to be taken up at High School:

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<sup>52</sup> Numerous commentators have recently considered the now a quite well recognised phenomenon whereby the transition from primary to secondary educational establishments sees a considerable drop-off in instrument playing and learning (Sloboda 2001; Green 2002; Lamont et al. 2003; Stalhammer 2003). Although it is difficult to provide the fullest evidence in the context of this study, there are indications that some of the negative consequences associated with this difficult transition have been bypassed by the three-tier education system still, at the time of writing, in force in Northumberland.

<sup>53</sup> While the quality of the music provision at the local Middle School may be one contingent element in the development of *musical habitus*, the predispositions of pupils towards such in-school music opportunities can be seen less as a result of contingency than of the structuring influence of primary musical socialisation.

[at High School] there's a lot of different instrument lessons you know, tenor lessons, bass guitar lessons, and \*CO-PARTICIPANT\* says bass and guitar lessons are absolutely great because apparently the teacher there is brilliant and a lot of my friends play guitar there...  
(Alex, SteelQuake, 14)

Indeed, where any negative aspects of in-school music education were reported by the SteelQuake participants interviewed, time constraints (born of a commitment to school work) were most often at their root:

If you take these [music] lessons you miss school, school lessons, so erm, I don't want to miss school.  
(Alice, SteelQuake, age 12)

There were, however, two SteelQuake respondents, Edwin and Samantha, who did not partake of any extra-curricular musical instrument learning organised through school. The reasons given for this were a lack of interest in “oldy” musical instruments (Edwin), and a difficulty in learning traditional instruments. It might be noted that both of these participants had grown up in households wherein music had received only low validation from significant others and that unlike the other SteelQuake participants I spoke to, prior to their CM project participation, neither of them had a great deal of experience with musical instruments. The ways in which school experiences of music appear to emerge, sequentially and resultantly, from the influences of primary musical socialisation, alerts us to the significant compound effects of the elements internal to the *musical habitus*.

Paralleling the majority of SteelQuake band members (both in terms of their high levels of school commitment and view of school and music as positively integrated phenomena), were most participants of the Redcar girls group. Here the same sense of ease and familiarity with traditional musical instrument playing and learning exhibited by SteelQuake respondents pervaded:

- R In my old school I used to get like a recorder or a flute or a vibraphone chucked at me and I just used to play it.
- M Really? So I guess, well, what else did you kind of play seriously, where you're giving it some practice time?
- R Guitar, like, the recorder, played flute and there was like, can't remember all the big one's I got in my primary school...  
(Andrea, Redcar, age 14)

For those girls at Redcar who did not report such numerous prior music-playing experiences, there were nevertheless many other instances of in-school vocal and drama performance to positively relate. Although Redcar Community College does not provide the option of studying GCSE music, by virtue of attaining specialist status for visual and performing arts, the school does offer a number of opportunities for involvement in music making activities. Several of these opportunities, which include the option of studying for a GCSE qualification in Performing Arts, after-school Brazilian drumming workshops and an opera project organised in collaboration with Northern Stage, had been taken up by project participants. Taking the largely positive experiences related here together with their participation in the CoMusica CM project (which is run in partnership with the school, on school premises, immediately after the end of the school day), these project participants can be largely described as school-committed young people for whom in-school music opportunities are seen as a natural extension of their own musical tastes and interests.

Casting the positively related encounters of music in school presented thus far into sharp relief however, are the attitudes offered by the lads at Raby Street.

- M What about like, other stuff to do with music at school, what was that like, the music lessons?
- R It was boring  
(Neil, Raby Street, age 18)
- R Sit there, divvn't dae nowt [don't do anything].  
(James, Raby Street, age 20)
- R I hated music at school.  
(Steve, Raby Street, age 18)



While school commitment was low in the case of the three participants quoted above (all of whom had left mainstream education by the time we met), the same sorts of attitudes were offered by most of the younger project participants. To put this in context, the Ofsted report for Benfield School reported the quality of provision in music to be ‘satisfactory’ (Ofsted 2002: 51) and that, on the whole, ‘Students have good attitudes to their music lessons’ (Ofsted 2002: 52). With the exception of Dave (music tuition with local vicar) and Brian (violin lessons in primary school), no other participants related any involvement in extra-curricula music activities organised through school and all expressed a dislike for curricular music lessons.

The basic point to be taken from this is that there existed a very apparent lack of “fit” between the musical opportunities provided within school-related contexts and those valued and sought by these young people. Indeed, when taking the broader operations of the Bourdieuan habitus into account, the failure of the lads to adapt successfully to the musical opportunities made available within school may be seen to result less from the inadequacy of either the provision or its reception, than a simple rejection of the broader status-allocating and legitimising functions (the *doxa*) of school. Such a presumption is supported by the fact that, generally speaking, participants of the Raby Street project sat in an uneasy relationship with the education system as a whole; most achieved relatively poorly at school, none of those interviewed expressed an interest in continuing in education after 16 and several had been subject to various kinds of behavioural sanctions (such as suspension and expulsion).

M     At school, did you ever, well, what was music like at school for example?

R     Actually I had a gan [go] on an organ, that was it like, just an organ.

M     Did you enjoy it?

R     Aye it was alreet. I didn't really like school to be honest with you...

(Steve, Raby Street, age 18)

In other instances, a similar phenomenon was observable; failure in academic terms translated straightforwardly onto curricular music being viewed as “just another subject” rich with opportunities for failure: “I wasn't really good at school...I don't

know why I wasn't, it just took us a lot to get it into me head" (Neil, age 18). In the following interview excerpt, Dave indicates both how he failed to connect with the music being taught in school until the radio was turned on (effectively a statement about the degree of divergence between his ideas of musical meaning, another component of *musical habitus*, and those esteemed by the school) and his associated frustrations with the music teacher:

- R I divvn't gan [don't go] to school anymore but when I used to go to school I never used to have nothing to do with music really like, apart from when me teacher used to put the radio on in the classroom sometimes, that's it.
- M What did you think of the music lessons?
- R Well, I didn't get along with me music teacher, lets just say that.  
(Dave, Raby Street, age 16)

In fact, several of the lads described their own musical interests as something that they used to sustain them, against the boredom of school lessons:

- M And do you write your own rhymes [lyrics]?
- R Aye, I've been doing that since I started...I've got loads. I used to just, boring lesson in school, used to write them in there.  
(Paul, Raby Street, age 16)

Even in the case of the slightly more school-committed Raby Street respondents, such as Brian, current musical interests and aspirations were difficult to reconcile with music as it was conceived of in educational environments:

Its like, we've got our options, I was talking to the music teacher, she says that I would have to take music if I want to become a DJ which I didn't know, and err I says "Why?" and, erm, "I thought you wouldn't have had to", and she says "Well you can do all about the history of music" and all that. I didn't think the history of music would have anything to do with it [learning how to DJ].  
(Brian, Raby Street, age 14)

Even in the case of the much more school-committed participants of other CM projects, reservations were nevertheless occasionally raised with regard to in-school musical

experiences. In some cases this emerged through already well-versed young musicians expressing feelings of not being sufficiently challenged:

M Did you study music at school and stuff then or?

R Well everyone does at school but at school you have to do like really simple stuff because not everyone knows how to read music and stuff.

(Rebecca, SteelQuake, age 12)

In other instances, the ways in which music was actually taught in school failed to grab the attention of participants:

R Our teacher gives us a lecture most of the time, gives you about a 35 minute lecture.

M Right, so you don't get to play or anything?

R No not normally and then every now and again it's keyboard.

(Joe, Redcar, age 14)

In other cases, the formal aspects of school music education, particularly its reliance on musical notation, was brought into question by interviewees. This situation was especially pronounced in instances where respondents' music learning and playing had largely developed in non-formal contexts, as was the case for the lads involved in the rock band activities at Redcar. Here the musical values and associations of the *musical habitus* concerned, and especially the emphasis on non-formal learning<sup>54</sup> accorded poorly with school music lessons. In an interesting exchange with the following respondent, an avid rock guitarist whose particular musical interest had largely developed through the initial influence of a parent ("our Dad"), the real point of contention with school-based music learning and teaching concerns the latter's failure to engage in any way with his notion of worthwhile musical activity.

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<sup>54</sup> See Green (2001) for a thoughtful discussion of "non-formal" and "informal" or OOSH (out-of-school-hours) music learning styles.

- R That's another thing about why I wanna teach it, make it better...take all the bad things about what the teachers do in here, turn 'em around
- M What are the bad things do you think?
- R Mr \*SCHOOL MUSIC TEACHER\*, prime example [points to claves on school music teacher's desk], his sticks.
- M The claves?
- R Yeah, and then piano. If he's got some work to do "Err, get your headphones on, do pianos" and that's it and they'll [pupils] just sit there and go like this [mimes tentative playing of keyboard] and not get taught anything...it's too, too in the past, no one really wants to do about it. Yeah, it might be in the curriculum but they should change it really, there's, it's just not on really, if you think about it.

(Matthew, Redcar, age 16)

Curricular music making is here portrayed as undertaken silently, in isolation and in a way that is largely irrelevant to pupils' musical interests. A further point particularly well articulated by this group of young rock music devotees concerned the almost exclusively "written" nature of much in-school music learning. Indeed, young people's perceptions about the relative appropriateness, for them, of in-school music activities (their acceptance or rejection of it in line with school achievement and commitment) may well arise in part out of the fact that the relation between academic achievement and school-based music activity is extended through the latter's predominant emphasis on written work. In the case of the following respondent, a considerable enthusiasm and interest in a range of styles of music making (including singing, as the only male, in school assemblies with the girls vocal group at Redcar), have nevertheless failed to equip him for the formalities of school curricular music activities:

- M Has anything ever kind of put you off being involved in music?
- R Well, everyone saying it's hard and you have to use your brain and....with school music you definitely have to use your brain, you have to be able to read to understand any work, and I'm dyslexic.

(Sam, Redcar, age 14)

Naturally, in cases where young people were able to respond more successfully to the valued aspects of academic endeavour, no such difficulties were encountered in the study of school music:



- M So is there quite a lot of theory and written work involved?  
 R It's a lot more practical I would say than theory. Theory, we do get one lesson of theory a week and then we get another lesson of generally practical [work]...you don't have to know written music but you learn it, you learn it on the course, but I'd rather learn that so...

(Craig, SteelQuake, age 14)

While Craig, a particularly dedicated and high achieving school student who had been benefiting from private musical tuition since the age of eight, found his tastes and interests falling in-line with those aspects of musical practice valued within the school environment, for many other project participants, school music was a far less natural extension to their musical worlds. In the case of this latter group, in-school music activity was criticised due to the fact that, at root, it overlooked the intentions that they bring to musical activity, their uses of music, the self-determinations it permits as well as the freedoms and choices it affords. Far from being abstract and nebulous idealisations, these elements filter through to the very practice of music making and the motivations brought to it by young people. The following respondent articulates such a fundamental lack of fit between his musical activities and aspirations with those of formal, in-school contexts thus:

- M You know like erm, music theory and stuff like that, how are you at that, I mean, can you read music off the stave?  
 R No I can read tabs [guitar tablature<sup>55</sup>] and that's it  
 M Guitar tabs?  
 R Yeah, I don't even know my chords, plus I prefer, I wanted to learn the guitar so I could play songs I didn't want to learn how to read music I just wanted to know how to play the songs.

(Joe, Redcar, age 14)

The overriding finding to emerge from these accounts is in the way young people's relations with the education system serve to either set constraints on their engagement

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<sup>55</sup> Guitar Tablature is a simplified form of musical notation used by some guitarists and bassists. Rather than requiring the comprehension of formal music notation, this system presents six lines to represent the six strings of the guitar (four for bass) and uses numbers along with other shorthand symbols to indicate the notes to be played – unlike standard music notation, this system it is commonly used by learning rock and pop guitarists today.

with music in educational contexts or else open out onto opportunities for further engagements with music. One crucial factor at work when considering this dynamic concerns the degree to which pupils' whole relationship with the education system variously directs them 'towards prestigious or devalued positions implying or excluding legitimate practice' (Bourdieu 1984: 25). In other words, given the fact that the musical activities undertaken within school settings largely conform with what I have elsewhere termed "legitimate" musical activities (see Chapter 2), young people standing in an already uneasy relation to the wider values of the academic establishment (through, for example, experiencing difficulties in terms of achievement or behaviour, or else rejecting the values of school for other reasons), are increasingly likely to exhibit musical tastes and interests at considerable variance with those valued and legitimated by the school. This typically leads such young people to respond to the musical activities undertaken within school contexts, and especially those forming part of the regular school curriculum, with an attitude characterised by rejection.

In the cases of those young people exhibiting a particularly low affinity with the broader values of the school (especially at secondary school), school-based music education tended to be viewed as of little value and interest. Of the four case studies undertaken, this trend was most noticeable at Raby Street, where the youth cultural values of project participants were at greatest variance with those endorsed by mainstream education. Across all of the case studies undertaken however, the relative degree of correspondence between participants own musical interests and those of their schools appeared to fall into line with the broader sense of commitment they had towards school and the whole academic endeavour. At Raby Street then, what we are witnessing are the particularly pronounced effects of a variably salient phenomenon. Indeed, both Bourdieu's work in *Distinction* (1979) and Roe's findings relating to school-commitment (1995) offer support to the thesis that young people's cultural tastes and activities can develop as much out of a response to the sorts of cultural-educational activities embraced by schools as they can the plethora of other possible influences.

Given the trends illustrated here, previous research findings demonstrating a strong correlation between school-based extra-curricular arts participation and educational

achievement (e.g., Heath et al.1998; Catterall et al. 1999), might often thus, rather than being simplistically read as further support for the value of the arts in education, be viewed as equally supportive of the often overlooked conclusion that those young people more positively disposed to educational settings (typically higher achievers) are the ones who tend to participate more in school-based arts programmes.

Related to the above, and similarly emerging from the participant testimonies gathered, come the perceived problems of the prescriptive nature of school-based music making activities. Where young people's attitudes towards school and/or their prior musical socialisation accord well with the expectations and requirements of the music making experiences available within mainstream educational contexts (what Bourdieu termed the *doxa* of this field), numerous avenues of musicality lie open; these can support a sense of self confidence and openness towards further musical opportunities:

Anyone gives me a musical instrument and I'll play it.  
(Andrea, Redcar, age 14)

[My] musical taste just kept changing and changing and changing and naturally \*PROJECT TUTOR\* turned up and then said, "Who wants to learn to play Steel Pans?" So I thought I'd give that a shot as well, I was kinda open to learn every sort of music...  
(Jake, SteelQuake, age 14)

In other instances, where young people either lacked a sense of ease or the *disposition* appropriate to handling and learning traditional musical instruments, where they felt little affinity with the pursuit of instrumental musical skills or else simply rejected the approach to music learning and playing maintained within school contexts, the *musical habitus* effectively gravitates away from these settings as potential providers of valued musical experiences. Alternate sources of influence upon the *musical habitus* subsequently take up the slack, so to speak, providing young people with sets of music-associated social relations and meanings towards which they might exercise greater feelings of autonomy. It is to an examination of these further sources of *musical habitus* that this discussion now turns.

#### 4.4 Musical Ties - Analysis

[It] depends what kind of people you hang around with...if you like one song and all your mates don't, you'll probably end up listening to your mates' [music] more than what you listen to, so its really people you hang around with that influence what you listen to.

(Joe, Redcar, age 14)

I was surprised to learn that Joe thought about musical tastes in this way: so often, modern British culture presents an image of musical affiliations as much more subject to the vagaries of personality; aesthetic individualism is presented as the dominant paradigm. His honesty was refreshing but also quite startling. Surely there is more to be said about adolescent musical tastes and preferences, the musical worlds in which teenagers move, than the simple matter of what significant peers happen to prefer. Could it be the case that Joe was particularly impressionable, or was it more to do with the nature of the musical world into which he was tentatively entering? Perhaps his attitude simply responded to the fact that he is an adolescent: either way, the power of personal relationships to both influence and respond to actor's musical interests appears to be of key importance. One way of thinking about the dynamic described above by Joe, and others like him, is to conceive of them in terms of a musical tie.

As was proposed in Chapter 2, a musical tie can be considered as referring to the real-world social interactions and friendships resulting from, as well as informing, actors' musical experiences; the significant social networks and peer groupings implicated in specific forms of musical activity and interest. Musical ties are significant aspects of almost all forms of musical activity and can serve to influence many other aspects of actors' lives than those concerned directly with music. As shall be explored below, the particular character of musical ties within the context of specific *musical habitus* can be at very great variance.

In what follows then, it might be useful for the reader to attempt to envisage the types of relations described as varying not only in their import qua social relations, but also in respect of the ways in which they relate to matters musical. What is of particular interest here is not only the kinds of social networks that interact with specific musical

interests, but also the ways in which these interactions play a part in youthful styles of life more broadly construed. That is, just as young people's relation to musical education sought to take account of their relationship to the whole education system, so musical ties might, in order to assess their relative significance, be most usefully viewed in light of the sum of the social ties maintained by actors. Against this background, the principal activities implicated in musical social ties will be examined across the cases studied.

So to return to Joe, a CM participant from the Redcar rock band strand, what other features characterise his musical ties? To begin with, I asked whether he spent much time talking to his friends about music:

People I hang around with are always talking about music cos we all play a certain instrument, so if they'll be talking about a song and I haven't heard it I'll go out and listen to it so I know what they're talking about.

(Joe, Redcar, age 14)

As I probed further I learned that Joe had only recently developed an enthusiasm for rock music. Since watching the ACDC videos on MTV that had sparked his initial interest in playing guitar, he'd saved up the money from his paper round and birthday to buy his first guitar and amp and had subsequently begun to collect records in earnest. Though he'd only been playing for a year or so now, his playing was coming along apace thanks to the guidance he received from Matthew, a co-participant in the rock band strand, and most recently he'd even started recording his own songs at home. "How have you learnt about all this?" I asked, assuming that the CM strand leader had been giving him the necessary advice and information. Not so: "we do that amongst ourselves..."

Every night after school we'll go in the practice room and have a little session, but there's some bits some people will know and other bits other people will know so it's a case of learning what you need to learn.

(Joe, Redcar, age 14)

A whole host of further social ties and activities have subsequently sprung up for Joe; although he still looks too young to gain access to the live music venues that some of his older friends attend, he visits friends' houses where group practices are held and also spends time jamming along with other players, all the while learning new songs, familiarising himself with non-formal learning techniques, learning about bands and coming up with ideas for song lyrics. The effect of his developing musical interest and activity has actually had a quite considerable impact on his friendship groups:

[Its] completely changed the people that I hang around with now, cos I hang around with people who are in my classes, but now I'm also, like, hanging out with Matthew...across [academic] years, people who are more into the same things as me

(Joe, Redcar, age 14)

It's even gone so far as to influence his relationships with people whose tastes differ from his (something that was never the case before):

Like people who love 50 Cent [American rap artist], I just don't like talking to them...you always end up getting in arguments with them, saying stuff like "He's a puffer" and stuff like that and they'd be like saying about headbanging and stuff like that and then just get in a big fight...nothing serious but it's like every time you talk to that one person they'll get more upset...

(Joe, Redcar, age 14)

In essence, Joe has simply begun to encounter the wider set of local adolescent relations associated with his favoured musical genre. Although varying in their degree of immersion into this genre-world, the sort of social-musical ties described by Joe were echoed by the other participants of the rock band strand of CM activity at Redcar. Indeed, the same kinds of shared and informal music listening, learning and playing practices are undertaken by teenage "bedroom" rock musicians up and down the country (Green 2001). It appears that in this genre-world, friendship building, musical collaboration, improved musicianship and musical experimentation are intimately linked phenomena.

While the girls' group at Redcar also described the part their shared interest in music and performance played in their friendships with one another, the situation described was quite different from that detailed by the boys. Whereas the latter coalesced around activities which gave music making a quite central role, in the case of the girls, their shared interest in mainstream pop and R n'B music, while forming the focus of some forms of sociability (such as their CM participation), generally appeared to play a less significant role:

M     Would you say music was important to you then, you know thinking about the whole thing?

R     Well yeah, I suppose so. I wouldn't know how but, I dunno, I listen to music everyday. If I had a day without music I would find it strange and a bit boring, I like listening to music when I'm doing things

(Jane, Redcar, age 13)

I dunno if you've ever seen like in New York and when they've got these big stereo kits ["ghetto blasters"] on their shoulders and they're carrying them around well...my friends who I play basketball with...put the music on and they're all jamming away on the courts while me and my friends are making up a dance in one corner...we'll just mess on.

(Andrea, Redcar, age 14)

The girls reported less of an interest in talking about music with friends, spent less time engaged with friends in music making and expressed a lower level of interest in attending music-based events and gatherings than did the boys group. That said, there were numerous reported instances of music's role in their shared experiences (more often providing a sonic background than the focus) and the way they influenced one another's musical preferences also echoed the boys' reports closely:

I'll, like, be influenced by my friends and stuff... they don't all listen to the same thing, so when they copy me CDs, you just listen to everyone's

(Jane, Redcar, age 13)

Generally, however, the girls group at Redcar is, first and foremost, a group of long-time school friends for whom an interest in dance and vocal performance have coalesced around a penchant for pop and commercially successful R n'B music to form

one of the numerous social activities they undertake together. That is, for the majority of the time they spend together, playing and listening to music are not of prime concern. This much was evident from the significantly different testimony of one of the girls, Charlotte, who, at the time we spoke, was beginning to explore opportunities and lifestyle elements of a more specifically music-related nature. She held much more clearly defined ideas about her musical likes and dislikes and exhibited a greater knowledge of bands and popular music than her co-participants (she responded with a barrage of band names when I asked what music she currently liked). Recently, she told me, she had begun to develop interests and style accoutrements very much in line with those of the “goth” subculture. She had also begun to spend time in the company of other fellow goths in Newcastle and Middlesbrough city centres on Saturday afternoons<sup>56</sup>.

Resembling the way social relations fell into line with musical tastes for Joe and Charlotte was the situation described by the young men at Raby Street. Most of the lads interviewed undertook a wide variety of social activities closely associated with their favoured music form. These included attending the New Monkey club in Sunderland and other local bars, pubs and club nights (especially the case for older respondents, yet also reported by respondents as young as 14), listening together in a range of situations, learning, teaching and practicing DJing and MCing together in bedrooms, garages and the youth club as well as making and trading practice tapes with one another. That said, given the close-knit nature of the group of young people attending Raby Street, it is indisputable that many of the other activities they undertake together do not take music as their primary focus. Then again, where the possibility arose of playing music concurrently with another activity, this course of action was usually followed (such as on youth centre organised coach trips, at the Raby Street summer barbeque, whilst playing pool in the youth centre, and so on).

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<sup>56</sup> Virtually every city, and most towns in the UK currently have one or more recognised hangout spots for adolescent “goth” and heavy metal devotees (these subcultural formations overlap in numerous regards). Indeed, numerous commercial outlets cater especially for the tastes of this youth grouping, supplying posters, T-shirts, tie-dye clothing, make-up and accessories – usually everything, in fact, except the music associated with this youth and increasingly young-adult style group. Although precise statistics tend not to be gathered on such matters, at the time of writing, this style faction, along with that of punk appears to be enjoying something of a temporary renaissance in popularity amongst British youth.



It also appeared clear that, in numerous ways, the musical activities undertaken at Raby Street were distinctly *about* social ties. For one thing, attendance at the New Monkey club was seen as something of a significant rite of passage by many of the lads, as was taking a turn on the microphone or decks at the youth club during CM sessions; indeed a high degree of peer-to-peer support and encouragement was evident during these musical activities – far much more, in fact, than during many of the other activities I witnessed the boys engaged in (at times they could not organise two five-a-side football teams without some sort of dispute breaking out). Given the homogeneity and centrality of the musical interests expressed by the lads (and visible in their styles of dress and comportment), I had expected the music to play a large part in their talk, yet this was not the case:

- M     Do you listen to it with mates as well or talk about it?  
R     Well, not really talking about it, but a good amount of time with my  
       mates listening

(Paul, Raby Street, age 16)

We don't really talk about it....

(Tony, Raby Street, age 15)

Music instead played a much more important role in facilitating social interaction and the sort of significant rituals so powerful in cementing group belonging around a shared and positive in-group identity. It also served to establish boundaries between who was and who was not *in* the group – effectively an exclusionary mechanism. Such socially stigmatising effects as are inherent in the lads' economic backgrounds, when combined with negative perceptions and assumptions generally made about their educational achievement and prospects (low-income employment or benefit dependency) tend to place them in the position of a vulnerable and yet feared and often derided social grouping. Witness, for instance, the widespread emergence, in 2004, of the term “chav”<sup>57</sup> and the stigma associated with it – a term which many would undoubtedly see

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<sup>57</sup> The term “chav”, (“charva” being the North Eastern variant), emerging prominently into social discourse in 2004, refers to a young person/young adult adopting a distinctive fashion and life style. Typically associated with the chav demographic are a variety of “telltale” fashion items: heavy gold jewellery, Rockport clothing, peak caps, stripy or Burberry shirts, tracksuits and white trainers. For evidence of the distain to which this somewhat nebulous group is subject, see: [www.chavscum.co.uk].

as appropriate to this group of young people. The effect of the lads' allegiance to a music form and associated lifestyle so rarely viewed with equanimity by non-adherents, is for the lads to build ever-stronger ties with one another and to look predominantly to the group for validation and support:

- M Do you hang around in a group?  
R There's loads of wa [us] yeah, so it doesn't look too good if the police see wa, but we don't really do nothing wrong.  
M How many of you, would you say?  
R Maybe sometimes 15 to 20

(Tony, Raby Street, age 15)

The occasionally intimidating nature of such a large and strongly attached group as was evident with these devotees of the rave/new monkey scene in Byker, rendered both acceptance by the group (my goal as researcher) and the gaining of the group's trust (goal of the CM workers) difficult to accomplish. This aspect of the rave/new monkey scene at Raby Street will be taken up in greater depth in Chapter 5.

Several further features of rave/new monkey and the way it was used by the lads as well as girls at Raby Street belie its predominantly social function. For one thing, the music itself is sonically dense, inaccessible and indeed quite challenging to most ears, including, initially, those of its followers:

I never really liked it at first but err, now, I met me mate Mark and he introduced us [me] to music. It's the best thing that's ever happened really like...

(Dave, Raby Street, age 16)

Aye, sort of like, me mates told us, sort of about rave and that, me mates told us about it...didn't like it at first but then, then I just kept on listening and I started liking it.

(Brian, Raby Street, age 14)

Predominant influences on the entrance routes into the musico-social world of rave were, for the overwhelming majority of lads with whom I spoke, friends and older

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For a much more even handed exploration of the term "chav" and its possible origins, see: [\[www.worldwidewords.org/topicalwords/tw-cha2.htm\]](http://www.worldwidewords.org/topicalwords/tw-cha2.htm)

relatives who encouraged similar tastes in the lads by simple dint of exposing them to it:

Well at first I hated it, but then every time I heard me friends listening to it I just got into it and ever since I've liked it.

(Tony, Raby Street, age 15)

Further testament to the powerful musico-social bonds with which the lads at Raby Street felt themselves entwined is revealed in Brian's account of his feelings about the effects of peer pressure and the subsumption of his sense of individuality:

When I was little I used to be, sort of, little mummy's boy or summat but now...I've changed a lot. It's like some people, like this kid at school, he always calls us a charva ["chav"], and that's what makes me think I've changed. When I was little I didn't used to be looking like the way I am now, wearing hats like this [Burberry cap], Rockport coats neither, I just used to be myself, now I'm just doing what everybody else does, its like follow the leader

(Brian, Raby Street, age 14)

Although their CM project participation took a quite different form to that of the lads at Raby Street, in several respects the musical ties of the girls involved in the Galafield project chimed in with those from Raby Street. To be more precise, they chimed in with the accounts gathered from the non-participating girls I spoke to at Raby Street, effectively forming something of a female counterpart to the boys' activity. When asked about their music listening and that of their friends, most of the girls reported listening to rave music<sup>58</sup> with friends and extended family members once again providing significant influences. The girls here also recognised the same sort of "follow the leader" dynamic related by Brian at Raby Street:

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<sup>58</sup> The girls actually termed this music "afterdark". As is the case with "new monkey" the young people name this style of rave music after the nightclub at which it is played. The Afterdark club is located in South Shields.

- M And how would you say you'd gotten into what you listen to nowadays?
- R Tracey [laughs], encouraging us to go to the afterdark parties and that. But people only do that sometimes because she likes it so I just...she just encourages us to like it
- (Caroline, Galafield, age 13)

Further echoing the attitudes of the boys at Raby Street, musical taste was both seen and used by the girls as a means of both comprehending youth social groupings and either allying or distancing oneself from them:

- R Charvas don't like hippies and hippies don't like charvas and none of them like goths
- M Why?
- R Cos they've got different fashion sense and they like different music and goths like black, it just reminds me of death...goths and hippies slit their wrists and then, it's just sick.
- M What about charvas, what do they do, have they got a reputation for anything?
- R Think they're solid [laughs]
- (Lisa, Galafield, age 13)

Here too, while music was not a particularly prominent topic of conversation, rave music was regularly listened to within social spaces and played an especially important role in the club-like setting of the music nights at the local Boy's Club which the girls regularly attended. It was clear that a significant factor in the girls' attendance at these musical occasions was the amount of young people in attendance and hence the socialising opportunities they afford:

- M And what's it [the Boy's Club] like?
- R Yeah, well the first time I went in, it wasn't very good, cos there wasn't very many people there, cos it was on a Wednesday night, and like they're better on a Friday or Saturday
- (Caroline, Galafield, age 13)

In the case of SteelQuake participants, far fewer such opportunities for musical ties to coalesce around particular genres or musical forms were reported; when they were, participation in the CM project was their primary source. Due to the variations in age, specific musical interests and the distances separating their immediate neighbourhoods,

less of a coherent, genre-defined picture emerges amongst the SteelQuake participants than was the case with the participants of the other projects studied. In addition, as individuals, the participants tended to exhibit a good deal of flexibility with respect to their musical likes and dislikes and maintained friendships with young people whose tastes varied considerably from their own:

Some are different from others you know, I've got some friends who are into gothic stuff and some friends are into lighter stuff, we're here and there but we all still get on fine, and we all listen to other people's music, you know

(Alex, SteelQuake, age 14)

There's not really many [of my] friends who like the same music as me...

(Edwin, SteelQuake, age 12)

Doubtless, this situation can be attributed, in part, to the geographical factors involved in living in a small and relatively remote town in rural Northumberland. Since the other young people within participants' age groups tended to live large distances apart, fans of specific musical genres could not easily socialise with one another and hence could not afford, for the sake of maintaining *some* friends, to give issues of musical taste high priority in decisions about friendships. Here then, wide-ranging tastes serve participants better than the sort of strict adherence to specific youth musical groupings as was evident at Raby Street and Galafield.

M Yeah. Have you got a lot of friends?

R My friends, like, live in Powburn and stuff, a few of them live in Wooler but... I don't come here [to Wooler] a lot, I live on a farm so I help there and my Mum's working quite a bit

(Edwin, SteelQuake, age 12)

Most of my friends live in Alnwick or on the other side of Alnwick so...

(Craig, SteelQuake, age 14)

By virtue of such geographical factors, the younger participants of the project, as yet less at liberty to travel greater distances, reported very few instances of social activity revolving specifically around music (again, with the exception of the CM project). For

older participants these still tended to be relatively restricted, both in terms of the range of options available and the number of other young people involved.

- M     What about music nights, you know like erm, gigs or...  
R     I've been to the Coldstream [nearby village] band night, it wasn't very good but there wasn't like an age limit...we were there for half an hour, we just rang our mam [mother] and told her to take us home...it wasn't very good.

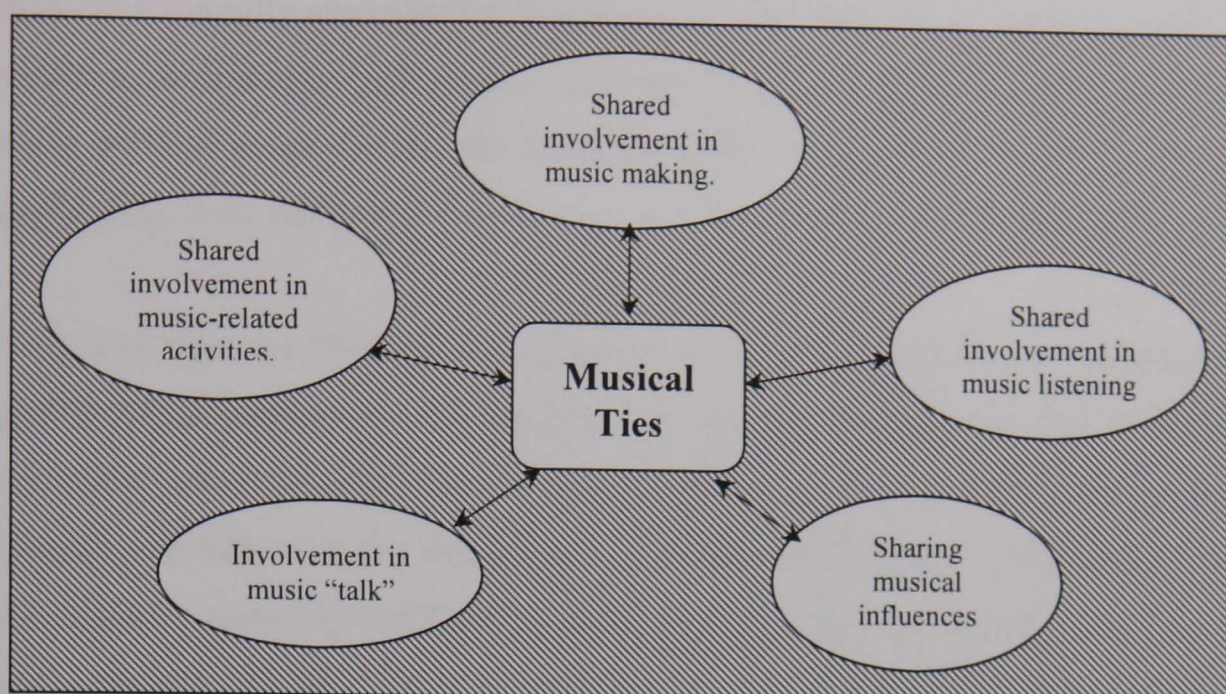
(Thomas, SteelQuake, age 14)

Where older participants did mention musical activities playing a greater part in friendships, the significance of music assumed an almost central importance; in these instances music-related “talk” featured much more prominently than was the case at other projects and both music listening and playing were highly significant in some cases (leading to the formation of bands). The overall picture remains a complex one however. While music played an important role in some participant’s friendships, for others its role was relatively insignificant – there was no rule of thumb – although in most cases a relative openness to others’ tastes was clearly discernable. Musico-social experiences were thus sought and valued, yet played a less consistently fundamental role and were approached with a greater degree of flexibility than was the case for most participants of the other projects. Undoubtedly, the aspects of participants’ musical ties most commonly shared across the SteelQuake project concerned the way the majority of listening experiences were undertaken alone, with playing and learning tending to gravitate strongly around variably formal contexts in which adult supervision was the norm.

From the above discussion, it is clear that musical ties can be influential elements in young people’s lives, yet in quite variable ways and to varying degrees. Figure 4.4 indicates the principal sorts of activities that fed into the musical ties highlighted by project participants.



Figure 4.4 – Principal Activities Implicated in Musical Ties



In the case of those young people who aligned their tastes with particular musical genres, specific sorts of activities, relations and attitudes tended to accompany these; again however, the ways in which this occurred and the aspects of experience and social relationships implicated, remained diverse. A shorthand way of thinking about the way that young people's relationships with particular genres implicate distinct sorts of activity and ties is to conceive of them as "genre-worlds". The genre-world of rock music, for instance, carries with it certain preferred forms of youthful musico-social interaction: informal jamming with friends, recording songs, performing at school band competitions, attending concerts and festivals with interested parents, and so on. In the case of another genre, such as rave, relative significance is granted to different activities: group listening situations, dancing, club attendance, and so on. Similarly, the origins of the influences leading young people to follow some genres rather than others varied according to certain trends (parents, older relatives or senior peers for rock; peer groups for rave; peers, TV and radio for pop/R n' B) as does the relative extent to which music is discussed, formally studied and supervised or else used as a "label" or "badge" of identification (Frith 1981). Naturally, while the precise boundaries of specific musical genres, or those of particular artists can be far from fixed and static, and perhaps especially so nowadays (consider the increasing hybridisation evident over

recent years, perhaps reaching its apogee in the style known as “mashup”<sup>59</sup>), the forms of musical sociability associated with particular, albeit broadly definable musical genres maintain a surprisingly high degree of integrity. Such differences as are inherent in varying musical genre-worlds can have powerful implications for the social relations engaged in by their adherents.

Having said that, my findings also provide evidence of considerable variations in the degree to which participants affiliated themselves with any particular genre at all. In the cases where levels of school-commitment and prior musical experiences were most notable (SteelQuake and the Redcar girls’ strand), young people’s attitudes to different musical genres were characterised by more openness and less exclusivity. As levels of school-commitment and musical learning decreased (Raby Street, Galafield) so appreciation of non-favoured genres was more critical, as were participants’ attitudes towards these genres’ followers. As shall be indicated more fully in this chapter’s final section however, as fundamental as musical ties are in many cases, they must be viewed in light of broader aspects of music-related experience and practice in order for their relative significance, within specific formations of *musical habitus*, to be fully grasped. Thus while some *musical habitus* effectively grant musical ties an exalted and indeed primary position in terms of peer group affiliation, for others, music is first and foremost *about* quite different things altogether.

#### 4.5 Musical Meaning – Analysis

Much of what has been described in the previous sections of this chapter bears close relation to the matter of musical meaning; the musical ties resulting from participants’ music-related activities, the degree of legitimacy afforded their interests by the education system, as well as the associations and significations established during primary musical socialisation can all be expected to feed into actors’ conceptualisations of the meaning of their musical practices and favoured musical styles. What I seek to determine in what follows are the meanings brought by participants to those aspects of their musical experience and action that carry greatest relative weight for them. Figure

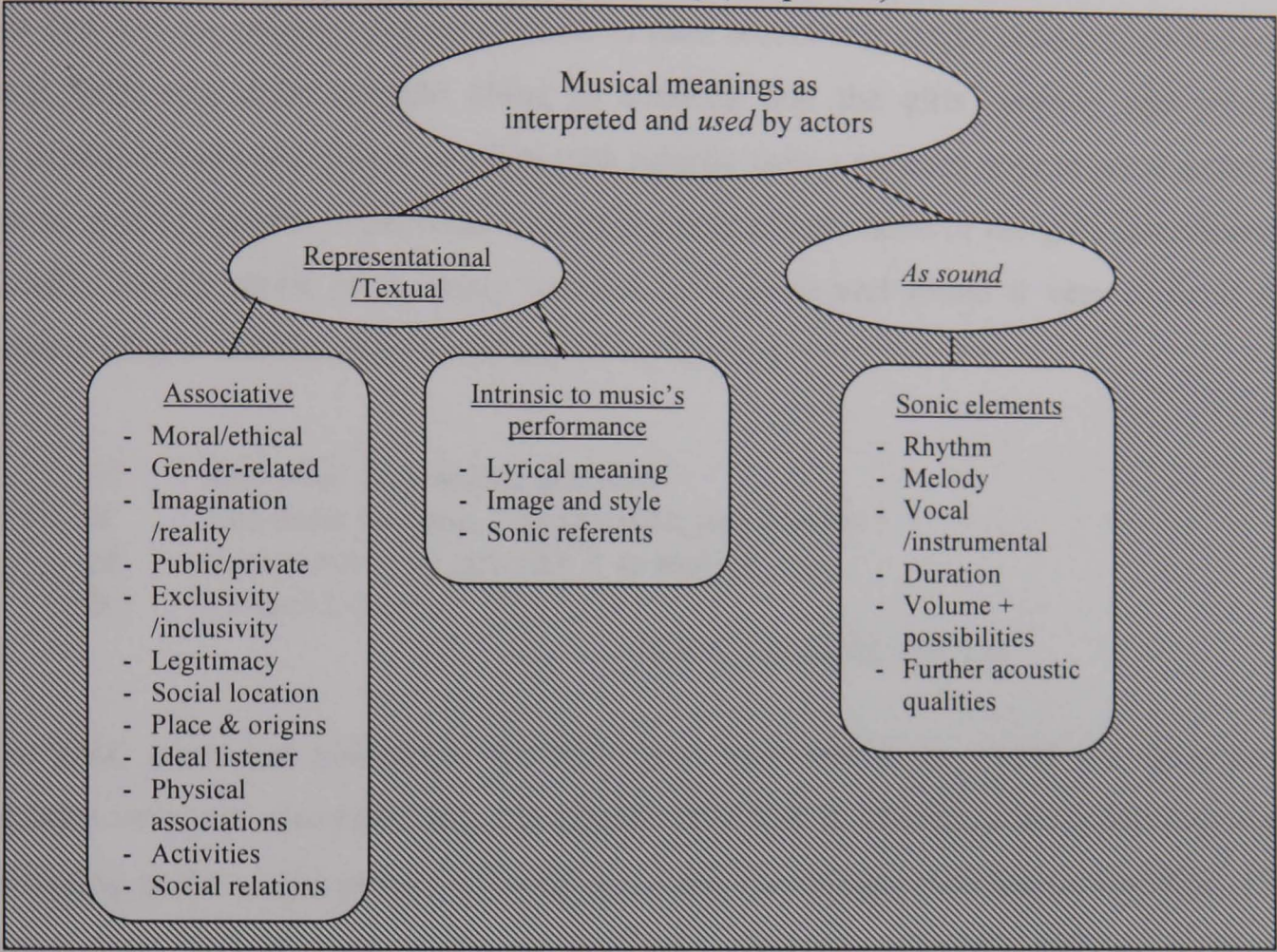
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<sup>59</sup> Mashup (also known as “bastard pop”) is a musical genre whose works typically consist of the combination (usually by digital means) of the music from one song with the a cappella version from another. In most cases, the music and vocals belong to completely different genres.



4.5 is provided to indicate some of the aspects of musical meaning to be dealt with in this section.

Figure 4.5 – Aspects of Musical Meaning (simplified).



The above figure does not seek to provide an indication of the various ways in which musical phenomena might mean for actors across all times and cultures. Rather, its aim is to simply highlight to the reader some of the ways in which music as listening or playing experience, served to provide the project participants interviewed with meanings of various kinds. As such, it reflects the themes raised by my respondents far more closely than it might those aspects of musical meaning considered in more philosophical terms by musicologists or students of culture.

To take the Galafield project participants first, the way most of the girls related their music experiences and associated activities indicated the presence of something of a musical schism. On the one hand, the girls attended what they called “afterdark parties”, nightclub-style events held at the local Boys Club, and listened to the same sort of music at the Galafield youth centre and at other youth-oriented social gatherings. Their belonging to this taste-public appeared to be primarily based around the opportunities

for socialising afforded by the rave music genre-world and, to be more specific, the opportunities for meeting boys. It was clear that romantic interests in somewhat distant boy-figures provided the girls with a good deal of interest. Such was the significance of this that it often overtook the actual aims of their attendance at CM sessions: photos (of local lads) would be brought along to sessions and the girls' weekly and public discussion of new love interests often took priority over a concern with musical activity per se. Indeed, despite expressing a liking for rave music, none of the girls interviewed actually owned much of it, rarely listened to it alone and found it very difficult to express what it was that they found appealing about it.

M And what do you like about it?

R Just think its good, I don't know, just liked it

M How would you describe it as music?

R [pause] Dunno

(Lisa, Galafield, age 13)

The girls' expressed preference for this music appeared to be based less upon any intrinsic or sonic elements than the simple fact that it offered a sense of in-group belonging to the young people growing up on the Newbiggin Hall Estate. Caroline, 13, puts it thus: "I think most people on the estate...they like afterdark and new monkey and that because, like, most people do". The overriding factor explaining afterdark/new monkey's broad popularity then, in this instance, appeared to be its already broad appeal. To opt out of such a musical reference group would be to risk being perceived of as a "hippy" (Lisa), or some other such out-group member.

As I probed the girls more about their musical evaluations (in the sense of those aspects of music or songs to which they were most drawn) the qualities of afterdark music – with its heavy rhythmic emphasis and barely discernable cavalcade of half-shouted lyrics – barely featured at all:



- R Me Ma [mother] plays like, oh, what's it called, George Michael and she's just got his album for her birthday and she's got this. they play in the town, Afu, they play like African music...its just like, all like African drums and stuff, kinda boring and no words
- M No words? Is that [words] what you look for then in a good bit of music?
- R Aye

(Caroline, Galafield, age 13)

- M So what it is that makes a good piece of music for you?
- R Gotta have good lyrics in it and its gotta mean something.

(Lisa, Galafield, age 13)

While rave music fulfilled something of a public and social role, the girls also had another side to their musical lives; one characterised more by listening in the home, often alone.

If I was with lots of people I would like, listen to this [afterdark], but if I was just by myself I would listen to R n' B or Michelle, all that sort of thing.

(Caroline, Galafield, age 13)

This latter style of music is of an utterly different sort to rave music in terms of both its properties as sound and its representational meanings (lyrical emphases and content, style, sonic texture). Much more highly valued in these personal listening experiences was lyrical content, the characteristics of specific performers (e.g., Pop Idol's Michelle: an archetypal underdog figure – a physically “big” girl in pop terms – who comes good *through* public support) the “upbeat” qualities of overall pieces and their “catchy tune”:

I dunno [I] just like catchy tunes as well...

(Caroline, Galafield, age 13)

- R Probably Christina Aguilera
- M Yeah? Why?
- R Cos I think she makes dead good songs, and like a catchy tune.

(Lisa, Galafield, age 13)

When I'm in a good mood I would put Michelle on...

(Lisa, Galafield, age 13)

The theme of romantic love (tying in with the girls' interest in boys), arguably *the* trope of choice for practitioners of pop and R n'B, emerged again here:

I heard it on the music channel...and I fancied him as well so I just bought his record and I've still got it.

(Caroline, Galafield, age 13)

M     Eminem? Alright, why?

R     Cos he's cute [laughs]

(Lisa, Galafield, age 13)

With their interests in music focussed largely on lyrical meanings, musical ties (especially male-female relations) and aspects of pop performers' style or the "look" of their music (they were avid watchers of music videos), the girls exhibited a relatively low interest in matters sonic-aesthetic (beyond the catchy tune) or questions of musicianship in the traditional sense. In other words, the primary ways in which music served to *mean* for the girls, appears to be through verbal and representational symbols rather than intrinsically sonic-aesthetic means.

For the lads at Raby Street, no such outlying interests in pop or indeed any other genre (with the exception of the odd liking for rap music) were in evidence; they *all* espoused an adherence to new monkey/rave music. What were the significant meanings of these lads' musical activity? One similarity with the Galafield girls concerned the significant import of musical events or gatherings. Notably, this genre brought with it, for the Raby Street lads, a variety of significant and quasi-ritualised group experiences. Attendance at rave clubs, such as the New Monkey club, figured prominently amongst these:

R     It's just full of people, dark room, got a balcony where the MCs gan [go] where the decks are n'that, just kind of loads of people go.

M     What's the atmosphere like in there?

R     Pure wicked

(Dave, Raby Street, age 20)

In line with rave music the world over, drug experiences are a notable aspect of its incarnations in the North East. This much is reflected in the music itself. Whereas other

forms of rave music eschew MCs, as far as “monkey” and “afterdark” go, the lyrical flow of the accompanying MCs is central – content that relies heavily on allusions to drugs. Drug use and musical experience were seen as part and parcel of the same cultural phenomenon, especially so in the case of the older lads. Steve gave me an example of a “rhyme” that had inspired him to write his own:

**Err,      “Buzzin’ off the ecstasy, things seem strange,  
Trippin’ on the LSD watching things change,  
Ecstasy now in your brain now this is what it does,  
Kinda making you go mental but it giving you the buzz”**

**And he explains what happens, that’s what I like about him [MC Lunatic]  
(Steve, Raby Street, age 18)**

According to the lads accounts, the specific properties of ecstasy, when combined with nightclub atmospheres and loud rhythmic new monkey music served up intense feelings of collectivity. Jimi Fritz, an experienced clubber, explains the drug-environment-music relationship in *Rave Culture: An Insider's Overview* (1999):

...the effects of the ecstasy were only one part of the equation. The music also had a powerful influence and was key to the overall effect. It was a combination of the people, the environment, the music and the drug, all conspiring to bring about a unique set of circumstances with the power to create a powerful and meaningful group experience.

(Fritz 1999: 6-7)

A further aspect of musical meaning for the lads at Raby Street concerned new monkey's connotations of locality or place<sup>60</sup>. While the young people at Raby Street see this music as very much theirs, specific to their time of life, and representative of their attitudes and lifestyles (in the context of non-aligned peers, parents and others), this ownership is not exclusive. A liking for certain new monkey MCs and DJs (of which each young man had a favourite) was also significantly indicative of being a Geordie rave fan.

<sup>60</sup> The fact that this music was predominantly referred to as either “monkey” or “new monkey” by the lads serves to set it apart from simple “rave”, broadly construed.

Picture 4.1 – New Monkey Club, Sunderland



[Used with permission from <http://www.ultimatebuzz.net/>]

There's a couple of MC's from London who come up for some specials...they're no good compared to the Geordie MCs...they're a lot slower compared to the Geordie ones, cos the Geordie accent is a lot quicker from other places so, and I prefer a quick MC...

(Tony, Raby Street, age 15)

R It's different around here, there's loads of melody [in the music] n'that...

M Have you heard it from other parts of the country as well?

R I've heard, well some rave aye, there's proper CDs out of rave, like bonkers n'that, rubbish tunes what you cannae get away with.

(Steve, Raby Street, age 18)

Considering how new monkey music is actually a locally adapted form of “makina”, a style of rave music originating from the (mainly gay) clubs of Spain and Italy, its appropriation and adaptation by young people in the North East can be said to have given its character a particularly local inflection. In the following excerpt, Steve suggests how the way he initially imaged the way his favourite “monkey” performer looked chimed in with an image of the prototypical “Geordie bloke” – one still evident on the city's streets today:

Like, I imagined MC Stompin, North East number one, like a baldy head n'that, big like that, but he's skinny with long hair...its mad.

(Steve, Raby Street, age 18)

Nor were the lads' musical heroes out of their direct sphere of reference. Part of the attraction of favourite monkey MCs and DJs lies in the fact that they are part of this local musical sub-genre, therefore serving to bolster its potency for them.

R I went to a party, you know my uncle Dave, he knows all of them [DJs and MCs], so all them they went to his party as well, so I got to meet them.

M So they're from round here?

R Sunderland and Newcastle just all over...Gateshead.

(Brian, Raby Street, age 14)

Given the proximity, in social space, of their musical heroes, the aspirations held by some of the lads of performing at one of their favourite clubs are therefore ever more within their reach:

M What do you want to do next with music?

R Err, just become, probably become an MC like probably like, hopefully one day, if I ever get the opportunity I'll snatch it.

(Dave, Raby Street, age 16)

A further aspect of the meaning of monkey music for the lads directly concerns its sonic-material affordances.

M Erm, how would you describe the kind of music you listen to?

R Fast.

M Right.

R It's the only music I really like, fast, I don't know why, just fast...much faster than any other music

(Neil, Raby Street, aged 18)

This quality of "fastness" relates directly to the music's idealized listening experiences, tied up as they are with the values of physicality, of energy and of creating a heightened state. The following interview excerpt illustrates this connection well:

Sometimes it gets us into the rhythm to play football, I thought of that, if I, that if I played football to it, that it would probably make us play a lot better, cos it gives you a lot of confidence, well for me it does...just gets you in the mood to do stuff really.

(Tony, Raby Street, age 15)

Since, for Tony and others like him, this music largely denotes instances of shared enjoyment, solidarity and group belonging, the sense in which the music “gives you confidence” would appear to be linked to both the sense of shared identity and heightened physical activity typically associated with it.

The musical interests of the lads at Raby Street can thus be summarised as centring upon a quite specific form, one with distinct protocols in terms of the content and delivery of its vocal elements as well as those organised by its DJs. Technical-musical abilities can furnish actors with a great degree of peer status, yet simply being one amongst the many of this relatively stigmatised form’s listeners appeared more fundamental in its appeal to followers, in terms of access to the perceived attractions of this genre-world. Lyrical meanings are assumed considerable significance to some listeners; although they may appear repetitive and under-considered to the outsider’s ear, their primary function is in fact to help accentuate the music’s principal euphoric qualities. Idealised listening experiences come in the form of public and large group gatherings characterised by nightclub-like atmospheres where music is played at loud volumes and accompanied by lights, smoke, etc. Perhaps significantly, this music provides its followers with the feeling of being distinct from mainstream youth culture and its institutions. At the same time, some of the values embraced by mainstream youth culture (ostensible displays of wealth/status, being “up-to-date”, being “edgy” or “street”) remain intact; these are however inflected with distinctly solidaristic, localised and masculine (hence, in some ways, quite “traditional”) as well as hedonistic and escapist overtones.

Curiously, the meanings valued by the boys in the Redcar rock music strand echoed those of the Raby Street lads in some respects. For one thing, the sonic affordances of heavy rock music provided the lads with a means of releasing pent-up energies and were seen as an especially effective means of dissolving feelings of anger:



Say you're angry...you want something you can bang your head to, you know?...It's like an anger thing, the louder it is the more angry you can get and then all your stress and that just leaves.

(Matthew, Redcar, age 13)

R If I'm in a bad mood and I put some music on, it calms you [me] down.

M So would you put calm music on to calm you down or rock music?

R Most of the time I put rock music on to calm us down.

(Sam, Redcar, age 13)

Although rock has numerous female followers, these lads particularly seized upon its masculine qualities; in most cases fathers had been initially instrumental in developing their sons' interests in the form. A further way in which the lads' musical meanings tied in with tropes of masculinity concern the matter of technical proficiency. As has been noted by Comber et al. (1993), the performance of music involving drums and electronic instruments provides a space for other masculine values. Of the boys' group, its leader Matthew was most forthright about what a "good" piece of (rock) music should do:

A good piece of music, got to be tight, you've got to have all the instruments tight...you've gotta have, good vocalist, good drummer, and just good guitarist, you've gotta be a good band, and a good tune, its gotta be tight.

(Matthew, Redcar, age 13)

Clearly, Matthew's evaluations placed technical instrumental musical skills high on the agenda. Correspondingly, to rely too much on other, less "hands-on" technologies is seen as cheating. For instance, look at digital dance music:

Its just samples from other things and then mixing it down and then, there's no musical talent, there's nothing, there's nothing there, but when you're doing live bands and that, you need the talent to play the instruments.

(Matthew, Redcar, age 13)

Bypassing the physically manipulative aspects of instrument playing is simply not allowed within such a conception of “good” music. It’s almost akin to a traditional craft, the learning of which requires time, practice and a great deal of “hard graft”: the best bands have got where they are today, according to Matthew, because “they’ve scraped their arse all the way from the bottom to the top”. Though some of rock’s meanings, for these lads, reside strongly in elements of its sonic properties and its suitability for configuring sought-after emotional releases (c.f. Willis’ motor-bike boys (1978)), the lyrics were not completely overlooked by the lads:

M      What do you like about a good piece of music?

R      Well, the way it’s written, the lyrics in it, if it’s got a good beat  
(Sam, Redcar, age 13)

R      If the song lyrics are no good I normally don’t like it...  
(Joe, Redcar, age 13)

When I probed further about the content of lyrics however, few of the boys could provide any kind of explanation of their interpretations in the same ways as the more pop-oriented girls I spoke to at Redcar, Galafield and SteelQuake. The lads appeared to be saying that while the “wrong” kind of lyrical sentiment might put them off a particular artist, if the music didn’t “sound right” in the first place, the lyrics were largely an irrelevance. Particular sonic qualities (loud guitars, heavy drums, tightness) were clearly primary then.

A notable difference from the rave music favoured by the lads at Raby Street concerns “classic” rock’s relative validation from the viewpoint of significant adults. While rebelliousness, excess and youthful exuberance are typically associated with rock music, the degree to which this element of the genre still carries meaning can be questioned. In recent years, for example, classic rock has come to be seen within mainstream, popular youth culture as something of a cliché (consider, for example, the tongue-in-cheek theatrics and huge popularity, largely amongst pop music fans, of rockers “The Darkness”). As the music industry produces ever more anodyne forms of rock, the genre’s rebellious edge appears to have been tempered. Indeed, at Redcar, the school’s deputy head teacher provided rock guitar lessons at lunch time and band practices were

facilitated within the school setting in ways that would certainly not be considered appropriate for music of a less legitimate nature (such as rave). The overriding meaning of these lads' affiliation with rock can thus be seen as something less of a statement of rebellion than its adherents would like to believe. For them, it was actually more closely aligned to elements of the traditional working-class values prevalent throughout the North East: masculinity and strength, manual-technical/craft skill, hard graft, the pub and drinking alcohol.

For the girls who participated at Redcar, rebelliousness was quite out of the question. Indeed, while the girls certainly enjoyed singing and dancing together, with only one exception amongst their number, music appeared to furnish the girls with relatively limited meanings. That is, socialising, style of dress, attitudes and broader features of lifestyle appeared to be barely affected by the girls' musical preferences. Indeed, their musical preferences were largely quite nebulous:

M     What are your tastes like at the minute, what kind of music are you into?

R     Erm, I like lots of things but [2] I don't know, there's not like a specific kind of music that I like

M     Hmm?

R     Just, I like good tunes

(Jane, Redcar, age 13)

M     What is it you listen for in a piece of music?

R     Ooo, [long pause] I don't know.

(Theresa, Redcar, age 13)

That said, the clarity or textural purity of voice seemed to provide one element upon which the girls based discriminations, as did, to a degree, lyrical content:

M     So how come you like them [Evanescence]?

R     It's all about different things, the words...it doesn't make sense to me, it's all just different things and it's quite interesting and stuff [laughs]. It's like some of it's soft and some of it's like really loud, it's really high like, her voice goes really high...

(Theresa, Redcar, age 13)

I don't really listen to music without singing in it so singing's in most stuff...[I like it] when the lyrics are definitely about something but sometimes they're, I just like the tune.

(Jane, Redcar, age 13)

As these excerpts indicate, above and beyond certain qualities of voice and an interest in lyrics that are “about something”, little emerged of thematic consistency in the girls expressed preferences. As at Galafield, catchy tunes, implying common appeal, repetitiveness and formularisation underpin the essential quality of what is, after all, popular music. Generally speaking, this sort of taste dynamic provides a broad and generalised set of musical meanings (“upbeat”, “melodious”, “danceable”), which refuse to align themselves with any noteworthy set of social or aesthetic characteristics beyond being broadly unobjectionable.

In talking with some of the girls, there appeared to be a sort of embarrassment, on their part, which arose out of a sense that their tastes were neither very well defined nor differentiated. In the following excerpt, for example, Theresa appeared irked by the way some of her peers used their knowledge and interest in music as a form of cultural capital, none of which she felt she possessed:

I haven't heard a lot of the new stuff that everyone's, like, talking about...and, like, I feel a bit stupid not knowing things that people are singing, not knowing what they are

(Theresa, Redcar, age 13)

This situation may well respond to the fact that girls generally use music less in the formation and maintenance of their social identities than do boys (Dibben 2002). Dibben attributes this situation to the fact that adolescent female music tastes tend to be ridiculed for their “artificiality” and “banality” when contrasted with the supposed “authenticity” of young men’s tastes. In a sense then, the ambiguity and lack of willingness to align themselves with specifically meaningful aspects of their musical experience, may be part of the way in which the girls at Redcar are simply performing their gender identities, just as the lads, through rock music, are performing theirs. Note, for example, how Charlotte, while in many ways different from the rest of the girls group at Redcar in her musical outlook, still maintains that one of her favourite groups

is not strictly a rock group, since they make liberal use of the decidedly more female-appropriate violin:

Evanescence aren't really that rocky and stuff, they've got, like, violins on some of them [their songs]

(Charlotte, Redcar, age 13)

The same feminine valuation of this band's music was also evident in the case of the younger female SteelQuake members, providing further evidence to the claim that the gender stereotyping of musical instruments is one of the domains in which gender beliefs operate most powerfully (Dibben 2002). In the following excerpt, piano is seen as providing the music's redeeming feminine qualities:

I don't like stuff that's like...just all guitars...that's the good thing about Evanescence because they have a tune in the background and there's piano and they've got the guitar on top, which makes it more rocky.

(Rebecca, SteelQuake, age 12)

As at Redcar, several of the female participants of SteelQuake also indicated ways in which the lyrical content of their favoured artists was significant; here the theme of love emerged as significant again.

Dunno just some of the words they say in songs just make you think... [the] Evanescence [song], "My Immortal", that always makes me think about things...about dying I think, but not leaving, like the person died and then the spirit never left her room or something, she wanted to get rid of it...she couldn't move on cos she always had this love for someone else.

(Samantha, SteelQuake, age 14)

In fact, the musical meanings seen as significant by the female SteelQuake participants largely reflected the same themes evoked by the girls at Redcar and, to a somewhat lesser degree, Galafield – affecting vocals, emotionally engaging lyrical content, an artists' style of dress or the "look" of the music, the catchiness of a tune and a generally upbeat sound:

I just, like, cos the lyrics are quite well set up and stuff, she's a really good singer the lead singer...she's got a really good sense of style and everything

(Rebecca, SteelQuake, age 12)

M So when you listen to a song is that what you listen for really, an interesting lyric?

R Yeah. Or a good like, a tune that catches you...yeah if erm, if I'm feeling depressed I'll put on a really happy song and if, [laughs] I'll put on a happy song if I'm happy as well [laughs].

(Alice, SteelQuake, age 12)

Once more, allegiance to particular music forms played a less salient part in friendships and public displays of taste were less confidently undertaken than was the case with the boys. Perhaps more significantly, however, and at greatest variance from the girls at Galafield (yet falling in step with the girls at Redcar), the SteelQuake girls expressed relatively flexible and varied music tastes, finding worth in the meanings of a range of musical forms, with only one respondent expressing a dislike for any particular style of music (rave).

For the young male participants of the SteelQuake project, while there was more evidence of the importance of allegiances to genres than was true of the girls, similar broadly appreciative attitudes towards a range of genres were evident. These included dance-techno music (although again, not rave), hip-hop and R n'B as well as jazz, classical music, rock, punk, heavy metal and 80s rock/pop. Interestingly, while adherence to some of the aforementioned styles may, in the case of some young people, lead them to denigrate other forms of music, this was far from being the case in Wooler.

Two of the lads I spoke to (Alex and Jake) had formed bands with friends and saw music as a source of numerous sorts of meanings: personal, political, lifestyle-oriented, ethical, aesthetic and social. Indeed, these young men, along with their co-participant Craig, expressed numerous sources of musical pleasure and meaning, from the satisfaction and sense of achievement gleaned from learning technical instrumental skills to empathising with lyricists about subjects ranging from war to vegetarianism. These young men had incorporated many aspects of musical activity and meaning into their everyday lives, from instrument practicing, live performance, concert attendance

and listening alone and in groups to even taking on board listening recommendations from teachers at school.

There appears little doubt that a slowly acquired hands-on familiarity with a range of musical styles is closely bound up with these young men's passion for music and its manifold possible meanings. Music has here effectively become a sphere of experience in which, as Alex told me, one can "use your imagination". Rather than remaining tied to the sort of strict representational meanings with which others infuse it, young men like Alex, Jake and Craig see it as a means of exposing themselves to a wide range of new experiences and encounters. As might be surmised, each of them has musical aspirations at the forefront of their minds when thinking of future careers.

Everything I do in music, I try a lot harder because I want to be a musician now.

(Craig, SteelQuake, age 14)

Given the lads' expressed openness to a breadth of musical styles, I was interested to ask them how they felt about others' attitudes to music, especially those young people aligned with what might be considered "extreme" musical subcultures or genres. In the following excerpt I used the example of "death metal" fans to provoke a response:

R They're obviously trying to make some sort of statement kind of thing, a sort of fashion thing, a statement about who you wanna be seen as and who you want to be, so yeah, it seems strange to me.

M Do you think that that's not what music should be about or something?

R No, it's not what it should be about at all...I listen to like everything and ...it didn't make me change like the way I am and the way I dress.

(Jake, SteelQuake, age 14)

Jake's point is revealing. As much as he sees music as capable of providing all sorts of meanings based on its immanent and sonic properties, his appreciation of the broader lifestyle elements so common in other young people's musical genre-worlds is actually quite atrophied. As far as he is concerned, music should not be about lifestyle elements, fashion accoutrements, or other forms of self-image management. Indeed, it was easy to

see why a confident, popular, intelligent and well-rounded young man such as he, blessed with a high level of musical ability and a stable and supportive home environment, could have little need for the sort of social, emotional and self-image-supporting elements that form substantial aspects of others' musical worlds. Fellow band member Craig's similarly unencumbered take on music-as-representation echoes Jake:

- R      Generally I'm just T-shirt [smiles and points at his bright yellow  
         T-shirt emblazoned with the name of a Trinidadian Steel Pan  
         band]  
M      You're happy to kind of go your own way then?  
R      Yeah.

(Craig, SteelQuake, age 14)

In the following, final excerpt from the boys at SteelQuake, Alex echoes Jake and Craig in seeing music as a terrain composed of relatively freely associative meanings, from which he can pick and choose as he sees fit:

I use it [music] for inspiration, I use it for anything really, it's just a thing that doesn't say "this is why you're listening to this", [instead] it's "you're listening to this and you do what you want now"...it's not gonna make you feel unhappy, it's gonna make you feel good about it.

(Alex, SteelQuake, age 14)

Even with the omission, from the above discussion, of the particularly idiosyncratic aspects of musical meanings offered by some participants, musical meaning might be said to still emerge as a capricious concept. Clearly, it does not reside simplistically in either the genre-worlds of which actors may see themselves as part, not wholly in their musical ties, nor in what I have elsewhere referred to as music's representational/textual meanings, nor just in its functioning *as sound*. Rather, musical meaning must be seen as encapsulating aspects of each of the above elements and crucially, inflecting their import through the prism of individual experience.

That said, genre allegiance does emerge as particularly significant for certain genre followers in ways that it certainly does not for other young people; the rave scene of the male monkey fans presents its followers with a host of meaningful activities and



associations, yet given the primacy of the larger group in this genre-world, the generation of personal meanings which fall outside of shared group understandings failed to figure prominently in respondents accounts. When taken in contrast to the more idiosyncratically significant elements of musical meaning derived by those such as Alex at SteelQuake, the meanings of musical practices reported by the lads at Raby Street appear predominantly shared, and even circumscribed, by the fact of musical group membership. Of course, such variation in the loci of musical meaning cannot be seen as anything but intimately connected to the broader conditions of youthful lives spent in Byker (close-knit, high multiple indices of deprivation score) compared to those lived in Wooler (separated, relatively low MID score). This alerts us to the ways in which the sources of musical meaning, for actors, transcend simple genre allegiances and incorporate into their actualisation a host of further environmental, social and personal, biographical details.

At the same time, it would appear imprudent to ignore the intimate connection between specific sets of social circumstance and the musical genres favoured by those living within them. This points our attention to the ways in which certain genres “afford” specific sorts of meanings in the way that others do not; meanings that will be of variable value and interest to actors living within the specific contexts. For example, ought it really come as a surprise to find aspirational, working class lads growing up against the declining industrial backdrop of Redcar seeking and finding, in their musical practices, validation for traditional values of working-class masculinity, manual-technical skill, hard work and a means of releasing pent-up anger? Of key importance here is a thorough recognition of the sorts of affordances, physical, emotional, cerebral, social and personal, inscribed in distinct musical genre-worlds.

Indeed, given the categorisational and classificatory operations to which professional musical activities are subject by a highly sophisticated and profit maximizing commercial music industry, it might come as even less of a surprise that genre-worlds are seen by young people in today’s musical marketplace, across very many of their meaningful dimensions, as pre-packaged wholes. These wholes are each targeted at specific audience demographics such that the signifiatory parameters of their products

(i.e., the relative interest value of specific musical products for audiences of certain genders, ages, ethnicities, disposable incomes, etc.) are effectively pre-given to music consumers. Thankfully, and largely as a result of the nature of music as a communicative form and the directness with which artists, performers and their music speak to their audiences, the operations of a meaning-generating marketing machine, however effective, cannot wholly determine the way young people bring their own experiences and intentions to musical artefacts.

While the breadth of significant musical meanings reported by the participants of the different projects is clearly one striking feature of the above discussion, it is also worth briefly mentioning the variable degree to which different sorts of musical meanings were at all sought. The patterns emerging here see the most musically adept youngsters surveying a greater breadth of meaning, yet in a way that grants no one aspect of musical meaning particular primacy (such as was the case for the less musically adept). That is, while less musically confident and knowledgeable young people appeared to invest most in the representational/textual and socially significant meanings of their activity, for those more at ease with musical materials (instruments, written music, record decks) and certain music-related practices (music learning strategies, performance, talking about music), a richer portrayal and appreciation of musical activity's distinctly sonic elements was also brought to bear. Naturally, such variously validated forms of musical meaning carry significant import when considering the possible avenues open for exploration with young people in the course of their CM participation. This is a theme to be explored in depth in the following chapter.

#### **4.6 Formations of *Musical Habitus*: Conclusions**

In the preceding sections of this chapter I have described how the participants of the four case studies reported their experiences of primary musical socialisation and music education before moving on to look at the musical ties and musical meanings with which their then-current musical experiences were bound up. Each of these four sets of factors can be seen as primarily influential upon the ensuing picture of actors' *musical habitus*.

In drawing the reader's attention to the ways in which these four aspects of *musical habitus* are interrelated within the context of specific musical biographies, I do not claim to have revealed the presence of either necessary or sufficient conditions for the development of subsequent musical dispositions and relationships with music. Rather, I hope to have been able to point to the ways in which the use of a concept such as *musical habitus* grants us a means of perceiving the ways in which certain significant aspects of actors' musical experience bear import for other elements of musical lives. Thus while it is impossible, in the context of this study, to control with certainty for all of the variable factors serving to predispose Alex, the young man described at the head of this chapter, to a certain range of preferred musical preferences and activities, it nevertheless is possible to observe continuities between the previous music-related experiences gained by Alex, in say, early socialisation and education, and the ways he now approaches the matters of music learning and playing. It is also possible to examine the other accounts provided by young people from a similar social milieu and to tentatively posit the existence of regularities, patterns and tendencies in the ways that, for example, actors endowed with experience characterised by X tend to subsequently be drawn to experiences characterised by Y, and rarely Z; although X may not necessarily always lead to Y, it is no reason to ignore the fact that it very often does, and to seek to examine some of the principle reasons why this might be so.

Such thinking lies at the heart of the Bourdieuan "logic of practice" which underpins the concept of *musical habitus*. As has been mentioned, this logic, in seeking to incorporate that vagueness that defines actors' practice and their ordinary relation to the world, always retains a degree of indeterminacy at its core. Keeping such indeterminacy in clear view, it can nevertheless be stated that several noticeable differences and patterns emerge across the four groups of project participants studied. Indeed, the relative homogeneity within participant groups, given the nature of their interests and that of the CM activity with which they engaged, immediately throws up a number of key variations (along with such basic discriminators as age and gender). Thus already partly inscribed in particular CM activities is information about the breadth of appeal that particular kinds of activity hold within given contexts (although, naturally, consideration must also be given to the range of participatory context factors).

Correspondingly, through learning more about participants' musical values and ideals, we can also gain insights into their relative openness or reticence to become engaged with certain aspects of musical experience.

Beneath this level of analysis, it is also possible to recognise a number of primary aspects of musical meaning (as detailed in figure 4.5) to which such variably open or reticent young people are disposed. On the basis of the diverse nature of participants' experiences of primary musical socialisation and their experiences of musical education, it is possible to glean an understanding of the ways in which such musical meanings function for participants, and to those forms of musical meaning to which they may be most amenable. A fundamental point is that in order to engage young people deeply and meaningfully with music-related activities, we must remain responsive to the proclivities inscribed in their *musical habitus* and seek, if we are to appeal to and sustain their interest and participation, to generate avenues of opportunity to which they are, certainly initially, positively inclined.

Recognition of the aforementioned patterns and tendencies nevertheless still leaves unconsidered several aspects of the ways young people bearing particular *musical habitus* approach and respond to CM activity. One of these concerns the degree to which *musical habitus* ought be considered a static, as opposed to a fluid entity. In stipulating both the structured *and* indeterminate (or polythetic) practical operations of the habitus, Bourdieu's work offers a picture characterised by both constraint *and* relative autonomy. People are not structurally constrained by predetermined life scripts, but make decisions driven by rules as well as creative improvisation. Individuals thus respond to social imperatives, not mechanistically, but more on the order of an experienced "player" of a game. This conceptualisation of practice avoids a dichotomous standpoint of necessity versus choice, and instead, blends rule compliance with improvisation in realistic ways. "Durable dispositions" do not therefore necessarily rule out actors' development of attributes such as creativity or innovation simply by dint of them having had little experience of what might be considered "creative" or "innovative" activity in the course of their socialisation. Rather, all actors are naturally

imbued with a game playing nature, the functioning of which is simply conditioned, in terms of its practical operations, by habitus.

In line with the above, the concept of *musical habitus* must not be seen as implying that a narrow range of musical tastes or set of musical dispositions (e.g., an antipathy to musical instrument playing) can never be anything but that. The *musical habitus* does not function as a simple reservoir for a set of dispositions and attitudes towards music and musical activity that remain necessarily fixed and will, in all cases, encourage the same kinds of responses. Rather, the functioning of the *musical habitus* alerts us to the fact that in order to induce those actors bearing relatively constricting or restrictive attitudes and dispositions to expand the range of practices they see as available to them, it may be necessary to overcome certain obstacles. Maintaining in clear view the structuring tendencies of experience also reminds us that the more consistently and intensely certain practices have come to receive positive or negative affirmation in actors' eyes, the more pervasive the effects of socialisation are likely to be. Still, however, the adaptive and generative *musical habitus* is open to influence – the doors are never conclusively closed.

In theory then, while it is likely to be difficult to encourage actors to initially accommodate practices that they classify as “unthinkable” and evaluate accordingly, this does not necessarily mean that the “unthinkable” can never be brought into the realm of the “thinkable”. The *musical habitus*, in other words, remains open to modification and alteration, given appropriate influences and opportunities. In this, the importance of CM participatory contexts offering up activities of a kind requiring only limited adaptation or “stretch” on the part of initially “narrow” *musical habitus*, appears paramount in terms of encouraging young people to adopt more welcoming attitudes towards musical activities of other sorts. A growing awareness and appreciation of practices relevant to one domain of experience, one field of social activity and evaluation, is likely to open out on to an expanded range of practices and the adjustment of evaluations relevant to that field.

A belief in the potential of generative musical activity to accelerate actors' belief in their potential to expand the range of their competencies, enjoyments and attributes is precisely that which comes to the fore so readily in community musicians' accounts of the value of their work. Unfortunately, however, inadequate recognition of the grounds upon which decisions relevant to actors' uptake and continuation of participatory opportunities are based can mean that the limitations inscribed in actors' *musical habitus* remain occluded from view. This means that negotiation of the initial obstacles faced by actors in approaching certain musical activities is less likely to be successfully facilitated. What this situation tells us then, is that the concept of *musical habitus* enables a deeper appreciation of the grounds for actors' musical activity (including their CM participation) and, by extension, a greater awareness of the nature of the musical activities most likely to encourage individuals to increase the breadth of what they see as perfectly appropriate "for the like of us". This question will be returned to again in subsequent chapters as the functioning of participatory contexts and their provision is explored in greater detail.

# CHAPTER 5 – COMMUNITY MUSIC PARTICIPATION

## 5.1 Introduction

I've been interviewed countless times by people saying "What have you got from pans? What have you got from CoMusica?" it's just...I've got so much from it, it's easy to answer the questions because it's all there.

(Jake, SteelQuake, age 14)

M Do you tell anyone what you do, outside the sessions?

R Not really.

M Is it something that's personal then?

R Not really, it's just, I'd have nothing to say.

(Lisa, Galafield, age 13)

This chapter principally concerns itself with the matter of participation in the four CM projects studied, considering the main features and outcomes reported as significant by participants. Not only did respondents' reports of their participatory experiences vary widely across projects (see above), but the nature of participation itself also varied considerably. To some extent then, the current chapter seeks to draw out the implications of such variation and to relate these to the ways each project's participatory context variably interacted with the *musical habitus* of its participants. As such, the focus rests largely upon the social relations of participation and the participatory processes enacted within projects (also referred elsewhere to as "in-session" activities).

That said, given the interlinked nature of the factors serving to make up participatory contexts, it will also be necessary to consider the import of the other contextual factors as they impinge upon participants' experiences of, and reactions to participation. One factor figuring amongst these, for example, is the effect of CM projects being based within specific institutional settings; this asks us to consider how the involvement of youth centre staff/teachers/parents was responded to by young people. A related consideration comes in the shape of the ways particular settings' place-rules (as they are responded to by participants) influence participatory experiences. Consideration of the broader contextual whole of young people's participation also requires us to account for the role played by non-participants in project decision making (e.g. Wooler's adult-

youth committee) and the ways further participatory opportunities affected participants' involvement. (e.g., offers of involvement in the CoMusica Youth Steering Group). Strictly speaking, while such factors relate more closely to the effects of space and provision in determining the nature of CM participatory contexts (as described in section 2.6), their effect upon the processes of participation nevertheless warrants attention.

The chapter begins, then, by outlining some general features of the CM participation that CoMusica sought to engender; this provides an idea of the parameters and main aims of the projects concerned. Following this, the focus turns to the particular forms of participation enacted in each of the four case studies, outlining noteworthy features of each and drawing distinctions between them in terms of the factors alluded to above. The chapter's next and most substantial section examines young people's accounts of their participation, its most valued aspects and its in-session relations, in an attempt to draw out its varying meanings and outcomes of different forms of CM activity as they interact with the constraining or autonomous aspects of young people's *musical habitus*. The next section of the chapter elucidates the key themes emerging from the foregrounding discussion, paying particular attention to the dynamics at work in questions surrounding, power, *musical habitus* and participatory contexts. The chapter's conclusion draws together the findings relating to the functioning of *musical habitus* in respect of participatory contexts, pointing out ways in which, when taken together, there emerges a basic framework for understanding the obstacles and opportunities facing CM projects seeking to engender outcomes at both the individual and bounded community level.

## **5.2 Community Music Participatory Contexts**

The dimensions of potential variation in CM activity proposed by Veblen (as discussed in section 1.2) offer scope for a considerable range of community music interventions, from an orchestra's community outreach work in hospitals or health centres, through to what are known as "early years" CM practitioners acquainting small groups of pre-school children with percussion and sound manipulation. It nevertheless ought to be recognised that the orthodoxy in much current, UK-based, CM practice is what is



known as “workshop” practice. In workshop practice, community musicians work with a defined group of participants to facilitate hands-on music making within CM sessions of set duration. This format was the most commonly adopted form of CM practice across the CoMusica programme of activity and, as such, this format applies, to greater and lesser degrees, to each of the case studies selected in this study. To give a further flavour of the nature of the CM activity ongoing in the case study projects, we can highlight the shared, overarching aims and objectives to which each project was subject. These aims and objectives state, at a basic level, the sorts of outcomes sought across projects as well as stipulating ways in which they might be brought about. Those aims and objectives holding particular relevance to the matter of participants’ involvement in projects are provided in Table 5.1 below.

Table 5.1: CoMusica Aims and Objectives Relevant to ‘In-session’ Activity.

Aim – Overall	Objectives: Local and overall
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To generate and support a high level of musical and personal aspiration in children and young people, and learning disabled adults, who have had least access to creative opportunities, for reasons of economic, demographic or geographic exclusion.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Set up local music-making projects with high quality music leaders and effective artistic and management support.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To encourage participants in using music making as a means of self expression and of having their say about issues of significance to them and to explore questions of culture, difference and community with children and young people and adults with learning disabilities through music.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ All young people involved to write/compose or create their own work in some form based on their own ideas and experiences, and be involved in multi-cultural musical experiences and debate.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To create an environment of collaboration, learning and performance that is accessible, enjoyable, challenging and conducive to high quality musical practice.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Ensure that spaces and resources are accessible to and meet the needs of young people.</li> <li>➤ Establish ground rules for participation that encourage commitment, rigour and constructive criticism.</li> </ul>

(Source: CoMusica Overall Evaluation Document, 2003, Appendix I)

Naturally, given the variation in the level and nature of participation developed across projects, the above aims brought correspondingly varied degrees of success in different projects. My approach in what follows will not be to measure the achievement of each

project against these aims and objectives; this is something undertaken in the course of regular project evaluation. Rather, I shall be assessing the relative value of the outcomes reported by young people with particular reference to the attitudes and musical values brought to the participatory context by them. In alerting the reader to some of CoMusica's overall aims and objectives then, my concern is simply to illustrate the nature of the broader participatory approach of which specific projects formed a part.

While stipulating some basic tenets of the CM participatory context, the aforementioned aims and objectives remain sufficiently broad to facilitate a host of working practices. Thus, taken alone, Table 5.1 gives us little indication of precisely how one might expect a typical CoMusica project to function in terms of its in-session participatory practices. Does, for example, the participating group sit quietly awaiting instruction from a project leader? How do participants have input on the nature of the activity engaged in? Who decides where and when performances take place? These are questions of significance for young people approaching, many for the first time, participatory music projects; their answers also furnish us with the necessary detail to begin to draw lines of divergence between the different forms of participation undertaken. Before I go on to describe the specific participatory practices of the projects studied in depth, let us firstly recognise some of the basic variations between them. Table 5.2 (below) reiterates numerous fundamental features of the four projects studied, as discussed at the end of Chapter 3.

Table 5.2: Basic Features of CM participatory contexts

	<u>Raby Street</u>	<u>Wooler</u>	<u>Galafield</u>	<u>Redcar</u> Girls    Lads	
<b>Average number of participants</b>	Indistinct (see below)	22	4	7	4
<b>Average weekly duration of CM activity</b>	2 hrs	6 hrs	1½ hrs	1½ hrs	
<b>Project Partners</b>	Youth Centre/City Arts Team	School/Parent Committee	Youth Centre/City Arts Team	School	
<b>Activity setting</b>	Youth Centre	School Building	Youth Centre/School	School Premises	
<b>In operation since...</b>	2001	2001	2001	2005	

5.2.1 Raby Street Participatory Context

Raby Street’s CM project sessions were characterised by a high degree of informality. At the first CM session I attended at the centre, two sets of musical activities were ongoing. At one end of the building, in the main room (which contained a DJ booth, in-house club-style lighting system, graffiti-painted walls, a pool table and numerous sofas and chairs) the older members of the seniors group (aged 16-20) were engaged in a self-guided music making activity under the watchful eye of the youth workers. In this space, some of the senior lads were DJing with their own records while microphones would be passed from hand to hand by the older MCs. The sound of this activity was generally audible throughout the centre for the duration of such seniors’ session (two hours) and, consequently, this room would usually be the main focus of activity in the centre on such evenings; on average, around half of the centre’s 40 or 50 attendees remained in this main room to join in or watch the musical activity, else to play pool, chat on the sofas or simply listen.

At the other end of the centre, in a small room known as the centre’s “Information Project space”, (which contained a desk, photocopier, fax machine, filing cabinets and sofa), two CoMusica practitioners arranged a further set of DJing equipment and

maintained an open door policy to the centre's young people. As a result, this room would typically play host to groups of between two and four younger lads (although a group of girls did also enter on one occasion) at a time, the latter taking turns attempting to mix records with the CM workers' help. Usually, young people ceased entering this space after around an hour of session time; far more appealing a prospect, on such evenings, was the atmosphere in the eminently communal environment of the main room, where the older lads were practicing.

In such sessions, the social relations of young people's participation were characterised by the close collectivity and unity of the lads within the centre. In terms of norms and values, the centre's younger lads very much followed the lead of the older ones, especially those able to DJ and MC well (this conferred considerable status) and as much as this appeared to encourage the younger lads to seek to develop such musical abilities for themselves, more significant, at such times, was the younger lads' being present to hear and watch their senior peers in action. This collectivity also brought with it a sense of ownership over the participatory space of the centre (which the lads treated very much as *their* domain) as well as some exclusivity in terms of access to the music making facilities; the rules of access to the decks and microphones in the centre's main room largely accorded with the group's status hierarchy (i.e., with dominant young males dictating who would perform when). In this there were numerous examples of the seniors finding greater success in initiating and encouraging the involvement of younger lads than did the CM practitioners, who were hidden away at the other end of the centre.

As a consequence of being under-exploited by the young people in the centre, the format of the CM workers input adopted numerous guises over the course of subsequent such evenings. On one occasion, the main room was given over to the sort of pair and small group guidance previously provided in the Information Project space. This approach met with only limited success however; unpractised as they were, the younger seniors reported feeling embarrassed in this situation and many refused to even take a turn on the decks. It stuck me that such a reaction reflected the way the younger lads were ill-at-ease with the provision of learning opportunities which violated their pre-established status rules. On another occasion, a laptop computer equipped with some

basic dance music software was brought along, on another the CM workers set up their equipment in the Information Project space while keeping the main room free from all musical activity. This time the room was crammed full of younger lads who sat, listening and chatting to two older lads playing records and MCing. Due to the severe overcrowding however, this was another experiment not to be repeated. Over the course of ensuing weeks and months, the project jumped from one activity to another in an attempt to find a format of CM activity that sat well with the lads' *musical habitus*, a significant element of which was closely allied to their pre-existing social relations.

As I became more familiar with some of the now older lads, I learnt that, several years ago, the CM sessions had adopted the form of a more strictly bounded (in terms of participants) workshop, operating at times when the centre was not open for general sessions, therefore implying fewer distractions and a shared commitment to participation. Participants had registered via a sign-up sheet and attended weekly two-hour sessions where, in a group numbering around seven, they learnt how to use the decks and mixer. Back then, a different community musician, Tony, had been in charge of the sessions at Raby Street. According to Danny, one of the centre's younger and more musically interested youth workers, Tony's course met with great success in terms of progress in the lads' music-making ability and confidence. Following Tony's departure, his replacement, Graham, was also successful, encouraging the lads to perform at local festivals and helping them to set up several local music events whilst continuing the DJ training. Following Graham's departure however, the project had never quite seen the same levels of enthusiasm, commitment or organisation on the part of the CM workers according to Danny. His assessment of the current incumbents was also critical: there was minimal consultation of the centre's young people, little to no evidence of session planning, no structured teaching programmes or discernable learning objectives while in terms of commitment, timekeeping and communication there was also considerable scope for improvement.

With the gradual deterioration of the CM sessions, by the end of my four-month period of fieldwork, none of the younger seniors could actually operate the decks well enough to take part in music performances or events. The project's integration into the wider

CoMusica network was also underdeveloped and following one notably unsatisfactory experience at a CoMusica Gathering<sup>61</sup>, neither the youth workers nor the young people at Raby Street were particularly keen to alter this situation.

With little progress being made on the music learning side, the centre's lead youth worker approached the lead CM worker to pass on the younger lads' expressed interest in organising a music event at which the older lads could perform. Following this meeting however, there was an extended absence from the centre on the part of the CM workers. Over the course of that summer and along with several youth workers, I worked with the younger seniors group in planning and executing a local DJ and MC competition. It was clear, after this experience, that that the lads' keenness to learn and interest in music had not evaporated, but that the music teaching provision and indeed, CoMusica's relationship with Raby Street (see Chapter 6), was in need of review. Just as this review was due to be undertaken, my fieldwork at Raby Street came to an end. When I called back into the centre several months later, I learnt that two new CM workers had been assigned to the project. However, since the project lacked any kind of organisational legacy (leaving new CM workers to start from scratch once they joined the project), and with key youth worker contact Danny now assigned to a new set of responsibilities, the project was still floundering to find a successful means of encouraging the young people of Byker's participation in music making.

### **5.2.2 SteelQuake Participatory Context**

SteelQuake project participants met twice a week (Wednesday and Saturday) for practice sessions of around three hours duration. When performances were scheduled, as was commonly the case, participants spent whole days together. This means that, over recent years, participants have spent a great deal of time working together. The

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<sup>61</sup> Several young men and women from Raby Street attended one of the first CoMusica Gatherings at Hexham, yet found the experience unsatisfactory for a number of reasons. Firstly, the transport organised by CoMusica left them at the venue two hours before the day was due to begin. Secondly, upon their arrival, none of the young people from Raby Street could see their names amongst those of the other young people who had signed up to participate in workshops, nor was the group's presence acknowledged in any way. Eventually, the group were told that they could participate in the DJing workshop only to find that this workshop was simply the same sort of taster that they had experienced before, run by their regular CM tutors, yet woefully under-equipped. Danny: "the DJs didn't have enough headshells [needles] to fit in all the decks... n'like there wasn't enough leads to set other decks up, d'you know like, it was just a bit of a farce really."

fruits of this labour were hard to ignore; immediately striking upon my first visit, was the way the project had set up a whole range of protocols and procedures such that its functioning resembled that of a well-oiled machine.

Project participants arrived promptly for practice sessions, often delivered, in groups of two, three or four by parents who shared out the transport duties. As the young people entered the pan yard, the lead CM project worker, Helen (who has been with the project since its inception), greeted them and had a quick word with one or more parents, each of whom stopped to chat briefly with one another also; the same sort of informal information exchange was evident at the close of practices too. With the young people gathered inside the pan yard, below the hubbub of greetings and jokes, and despite the cramped conditions, the SteelQuake members independently set up their steel pans into their normal positions while one band member collected subscription charges (£1 per week). Gradually the sound of the young people's voices gave way to the disorganised patter of steel pans; warm-up had begun even though, as yet, Helen had scarcely addressed the group. Giving the signal for quiet by tapping her steel pan stand, Helen was immediately able to get the whole group's attention. A few updates followed – arrangements for the band's upcoming performances were discussed, the latest gig list was distributed, questions and queries were quickly dealt with, all with a minimum of fuss.

At the level of the organisational teamwork evident between its participants, SteelQuake rated highly; rarely could two voices ever be heard competing for attention in group situations, and when something needed to be discussed, everyone knew well enough not to be tapping away on their pan. As the music-making element of the session began in earnest, Helen told the group what they would be working on first. As she counted the group into their first run-through of a familiar song (the band has a repertoire of around 25 pieces), they came in right on the button. After a minute or so, Helen was once more tapping her pan stand; the tenor section of the band (steel pan bands are divided up into "sections" much like a classical orchestra) needed to "drill" a part some more. As they got on with this, Helen stepped from behind her pan (she always plays along with the band, even in performances) and spoke to the other sections pointing up where there

was room for improvement. In some cases, the correct notes were shouted out, for others Helen went over to their pan to manually illustrate what was needed for the song, while in other cases it was enough to sing the notes. A moment later, after four more taps on the pan stand, the band had struck up in unison once more. And so the session went on; old songs were practiced and new songs were learnt in the same step-by-step style.

Steel pan bands are quite flexible musical constructs, both in terms of the instruments that can be accommodated in the band, the music that can be played and the number of players and pans they can use. The sheer amount of players involved combined with the great potential for noise making at their disposal (every band member has exclusive access to their instrument(s)) implies the need for steel pan bands to develop as structured an approach to learning and practicing as possible. Helen, who together with an assistant runs all of the practice sessions for the band, has gained a great deal of experience playing with steel pan bands, first in the North East and subsequently in Europe and beyond. Consequently, with SteelQuake (her first CM project as band leader), she has incorporated into the project those examples of good practice witnessed in working with other bands. Thus in terms of the way the project goes about the recruitment and retention of players, the organisation of duties and responsibilities, gigging, playing as well as learning, the broader culture of steel pan bands provides a working template for the participatory processes initiated. This is evident in the assumed role of the band's leader, its internal division into sections, the devolution of responsibilities to "section leaders" (who keep their sections in line both musically and otherwise), as well as in the Trinidadian spirit with which the band has returned from its travels.

The high degree of organisation that characterises practice sessions runs through other aspects of the project too; despite the logistical difficulties of transporting around 30 steel pans and their players to and from performances, nothing about the bands activities appears uncoordinated. Naturally, things weren't always so straightforward – it did take time to achieve this smoothness of functioning. Significantly however, as Helen told me, it was clear right from the outset that there would be few behavioural problems with



this group of young people. The input of other Wooler residents has also been considerable. Take the youth/parent project committee for example: one parent takes gig bookings (for which the band charge a fee), one oversees transport (a horse box transports the pans around), another is treasurer, there's a chairperson, a secretary and several general members. With such a high degree of parental involvement in the project, parents can also rest assured that their children are in safe hands.

Over the years, the project has raised considerable funds (£4,000 in just one day of busking in Newcastle city centre for instance), sent two groups of young people out to Trinidad for upwards of a month each to compete in the world Steel Pan competition "Panorama", established strong links and developed exchanges with London-based steel pan band "Ebony" (one of Europe's premier outfits), participated in numerous Notting Hill Carnivals and performed nationally more than 150 times. Nowadays the band earns revenue through performance, an achievement in and of itself, but one which is further capitalised upon when this revenue provides for band expenses, flight and accommodation costs and so on. Through gaining supplementary playing and performing experiences, effort is rewarded, motivation increased and the further growth in performance confidence and ability is facilitated; the virtuous cycle continues.

### **5.2.3 Galafield Participatory Context**

Back when it began, the project at Galafield was composed of two strands of activity; one each for the girls and lads attending regular youth club sessions. After several different project configurations and changes in CM workers, the lads' strand, at the behest of the project's key youth worker contact at the centre, underwent a drastic change in form that had a considerable effect on participant numbers. This was, however, of little import for my study since I had already decided to focus my attention predominantly upon the girls' strand of CoMusica's activity at Galafield.

During their sessions, the four regularly participating girls spent 90 minutes per week working on song writing and singing activities. The girls were good friends who all lived locally and had spent a considerable amount of time together away from CM sessions. That said there were, between the four members of the participating group,

certain relationships characterised by deep friendship and others by mild acrimony. The complexity of these friendship relationships was also undergoing shift during this time, largely due to the varying pathways and opportunities opening up to the different group members (in part due to their differing career ambitions, academic achievements and constantly evolving social networks). This was a period of time then, during which the social relations of the projects four participants, while generally characterised by intimacy and long-held associations, were also subject to a degree of conflict, status struggle and shifting allegiance.

By virtue of the lack of music-making resources at the centre, a laptop computer had previously supplied the musical component of the girls' musical activity. Due to a change in CM staffing, however, the laptop's use in these sessions had recently been suspended, to be replaced now by a keyboard and guitar brought along by the project's new lead CM worker, Emma, who specialised in vocal and pop song writing. Accompanying Emma from CoMusica was Phil (a rapper and rap lyric writer) and Jane (a recent music graduate and CoMusica trainee). The venue for the CoMusica sessions was also undergoing review as my time with the project began. In order to provide more time for CM participation, all parties involved agreed that the sessions should move from the centre to the nearby Kenton School. This suited both Emma, who sought new recruits to the project, as well as the girls (who disliked attending the centre while still wearing their school uniforms).

The project was also in something of a transitional phase in other ways; on the occasion of my first visit, the final meeting at the centre for some time, a new protocol for project sessions was agreed whereby group discussions would be held at the beginning and end of each session. This decision was taken by the lead CM worker Emma, after she had been challenged by one the girls, Lisa, for showing favouritism to her co-participant, Elizabeth. Elizabeth, as it happened, had been invited to attend several CoMusica Youth Steering Group events and, according to Lisa, was the only member of the group whose input Emma genuinely took on-board. Following Lisa's comments (whose sentiments were shared by the three other members of the group and whose enactment was supported by youth worker Dave), along with the shift in location, a new contract of

openness was established such that any disputes or problems would be aired and dealt with on an ongoing basis.

The classroom into which the project moved at Kenton School offered two spaces; a small music cupboard (occupied by instruments) and the main classroom it adjoined (housing, along with tables and chairs, a piano and numerous keyboards). Although the school offers access to further on-site music making and recording facilities, these were not accessed while the project was based at the school. Indeed, as mentioned in the previous chapter, the hands-on production of sound (using instruments or technology) scarcely appealed to the girls; more often, the CoMusica CM practitioners would seek to provide, after discussions with the girls, appropriate backing music over which they could sing their songs.

In terms of the structure and processes involved in sessions, each began with around ten or so minutes discussing upcoming performance opportunities, reviewing previous work and deliberating what the day's session would entail. Unfortunately however, throughout such planning sections of the session, two of the groups' four participants, Lisa and Elsa, showed scant attention to proceedings, often preferring to chat or relate a story (often in a quite dramatic or exaggerated manner) to one or more of the adults present. With in-session behaviour following much the same pattern, sessions would often be severely sidetracked and even derailed by the drama brought into the session by half of the project participant group. With five adults and four young people in attendance, it is easy to see how Lisa and Elsa might have come to see these sessions as opportunities to give voice to their concerns with an adult audience which, by virtue of its concern for their interest, would feel obliged to engage with the sometimes personal nature of the issues raised. Indeed, on occasion youth worker Dave (who was also present during sessions) would seize upon such issues in the hope of turning them into the kernel of an idea for a song. Typically, however, the girls quickly rebuffed such suggestions. In fact, Lisa and Elsa's interest in making songs (particularly in terms of working with sound) appeared far from at the forefront of their minds on such occasions and sessions would thus often get off on an uncertain footing.

Keen that the session not be completely overshadowed by the weekly travails of these two girls, Emma usually set Lisa and Elsa to work in the classroom's adjoining music cupboard with Phil and Jane while she worked, on an almost exclusive basis from week to week, with Caroline and Elizabeth, developing a song to which the latter had written lyrics accompanying Emma's piano parts. Together, Emma's small group made good progress as they worked on shaping vocal, lyrical and musical ideas into a performable song structure. As far as the other group went however, despite the best efforts of Phil, Jane and myself (on occasion), Lisa and Elsa continually proved more difficult to actively engage in either music or lyric writing (they were, they said, "bored of writing songs"). Within around 20 or so minutes of each session's initiation, Lisa and Elsa usually declared that it was time for them to quit the session for their regular cigarette break; as Elizabeth and Caroline accompanied them outside, any sense of momentum so far generated within sessions was soon lost.

Over the weeks and months the same problematic patterns emerged; Lisa and Elsa became increasingly frustrated and apathetic towards their own activities, especially so in light of Elizabeth and Caroline's progress with Emma. The group nevertheless attended a CoMusica Gathering at Gateshead Old Town Hall where both pairs of girls performed the songs they had been working on. Just as prospects were temporarily looking up however, relations turned sour within the group. First, one of either Lisa or Elsa was absent for several consecutive weeks and when they were eventually next in attendance together, they came with the news that Caroline had been ostracized; she was never to return to the sessions. Following this, Elizabeth worked alone with project leader Emma for several weeks before the decision to move the sessions back to the youth centre was taken. Although a new participant joined just prior to quitting the project in the form of rap devotee Asif, with only four participants, and effectively three distinct strands of musical activity (Asif with Phil, Elizabeth with Emma, and Lisa and Elsa with Jane and I) participation, as a dynamic group activity, had largely given way to one-to-one and pair group working.

#### **5.2.4 Redcar Participatory Context**

A number of similarities exist between the participatory contexts of Galafield and the girls' group at Redcar Community College. In both projects, CM practitioner Emma led singing sessions in school music classrooms. In both cases, project participants were already well known to one another (by virtue of attending the same school) and the power dynamics established between significant friendship triads and dyads affected the ways participants related and responded to one another. The girls' sessions at Redcar were dominated, in terms of the participatory dynamic, by a group of five close friends and classmates aged 13 to 14. Most of these girls were what could be considered "school-committed" in their attitudes and they achieved well academically. Their decision to participate in the CM sessions responded largely to their enjoyment of singing together, something they had been doing for years and which was given particular value by the most influential girl amongst them. Their approach to CM participation was characterised by a kind of cultivated passivity while also being somewhat exclusive; since they formed the majority group within CM sessions, and since they were happy to follow all the suggestions of the project's CM practitioners in their musical activities (to the point, it appeared, of suppressing their own creativity), any other participants who sought to bring their own influence to the sessions soon found themselves outnumbered and marginalized. This was the situation faced by Charlotte and Rachel, two more strongly willed and musically enthusiastic participants who came up, several times, against the focussed compliance of the larger group and the pre-determined approach of the CM practitioners. Despite the ever presence of such background tension within sessions, the functioning of the Redcar project was, ostensibly, far smoother than was the case at Galafield. For one thing, that the group at Redcar was slightly more numerous meant that the scope for individual personalities and behavioural issues to dominate proceedings was less pronounced, although far from totally absent. It also meant that the girls' singing workshops unfolded with all participants involved in the same activity, at the same time.

Again, as with the Galafield project, sessions typically began with a period of "circle time"; Emma stated the objective of the day's session (determined beforehand between herself and the other CM workers) and reminded participants about upcoming

performances for which they were preparing. This time also gave participants the opportunity to raise issues as they wished (something the majority of the group showed little interest in – those who did speak up or seek to introduce other ideas were seen by the mainstay of the group as disruptive). After this, CM practitioner Sue led the group in a warm-up that involved combining movement and song in a style that might best be described as a slightly more advanced ring-a-ring o' roses. The majority of the group adopted a light-hearted and enthusiastic approach towards this sort of activity, even though it did appear that it would have been more appropriately targeted at a primary school age group. Charlotte and Rachel reluctantly joined in, through it appeared clear that this was not exactly something they cherished.

As sessions proceeded, it was generally evident that for the majority of the group, issues of choice and expression through musical activity and the use of musical materials were less significant than the fact of simply being engaged, with friends, in a guided singing session with an undoubtedly talented CM session leader and three further CM tutors (two of whom were CoMusica trainees). The girls worked on a number of songs, predominantly cover versions of popular artists' work, yet interpreted in such a way as to put the musical emphasis on vocal harmonisation. Several of the girls remarked how much they enjoyed hearing the sound they produced together. It appeared to matter less to them that decisions about the choice of material, its arrangement, dynamics, tempo and so on, had been determined almost exclusively by the CM workers and subsequently taught to the girls in something of a "rote" manner.

A noteworthy aspect of this projects' participatory context was its strongly school-associated nature. On occasion, teachers entered the classroom in which sessions were taking place to join in with the girls' singing (participants were not consulted about this). The context of the school also provided an arena for performance in the shape of school assemblies. The purpose of such performances (which took place bi-monthly on average) was to attract new recruits to the group – something it consistently failed to achieve with any great success. Girls' group performances also took place at a number of youth music events in the Teesside area as well as at the CoMusica Gatherings.

An interesting aside to the girls' usual vocal harmony singing activity was their occasional collaboration with the lads' rock group strand of the project. On several occasions, the groups rehearsed songs together (songs chosen by the lads) and performed them publicly – experiences of which both groups subsequently spoke well. On the whole however, and with the exception of occasions when the lads found access to their practice room barred, this groups' activities (practising, writing and recording) largely developed away from those of the girls. When they did work together, some of the boys accompanied the girls singing with guitar and vocals in line with the suggestions proposed by the CM practitioners. Such collaborations were usually to the benefit of both project strands and responded to occasions when, due to increasing academic pressures, the uptake of part-time employment or involvement on sports teams, members of both the boys' and girls' groups attended less frequently. Indeed, such were the difficulties in retaining participants of the girls' strand that, on several occasions, the CM project workers pleaded with participants to consider sacrificing their other commitments in order to prepare for and attend an upcoming performance at a CoMusica Gathering.

For the first month or so of my time at Redcar, the music making activities of the boys' group largely took place in a way disengaged from the girls group and, as such, from the CoMusica project. After this time, a CoMusica CM practitioner worked with the group by recording their songs with them and introducing them to recording techniques and computer software. This worker was later to be replaced by Rob, a specialist in rock band development. With their shared vision of making the band a "tighter" and better-sounding outfit, Rob and the boys made good progress in the short amount of time I witnessed their collaboration. By this time, better facilities had also been secured for the boy's activities in the school's attached youth block.

In terms of their participation in the wider CoMusica network, two members of the boys group attended CoMusica Gatherings, joining the other young regional musicians in large group performances (upwards of 30 musicians jamming a piece arranged and orchestrated by a CoMusica CM practitioner) while singer Joe attended several Steering Group Meetings where he participated in the recording of original group compositions.

The CD with which he returned from one such residential very much impressed his co-participants.

With my time at Redcar coming to an end, lead practitioner Emma left the project and the incoming lead worker, Sue, anticipated a change in direction. Though she had been with the project since its inception, Sue was aware that recruitment of musically interested and time-rich young people had been an issue for the project, as had been the retention of the current time-poor participants. As she told me: “I know that we’re also not hitting the really tricky ones [young people]...you know, there’s a whole element that we’re not working with, we’re working probably with the nicer end” (Sue, Redcar, Project Leader).

### **5.3 Participation: Constraint and Autonomy**

While the participants of this study could all be assumed to find their CM participation worthwhile in one way or another (by simple dint of their continued participation), both the extent and nature of participation evaluations vary across projects and from participant to participant within projects. This provides two potentially fruitful approaches to the question of how participants engaged with specific participatory contexts; firstly, as a group (i.e., largely as a function of the appropriateness and appeal of the project to them as a particular demographic of young people within a certain setting); and secondly, as individuals (where Bourdieuan and *musical habitus* provided the basis upon which their participation proceeded). In line with this, and recognising the important variation brought to the picture of young people’s participation by virtue of the significant differences between projects’ participatory contexts, the analysis to follow discusses each project in turn.

Although the degree of variance between projects bars the possibility of simplistic comparison, it should nevertheless be possible, throughout the course of the following analysis, to gain an understanding of not only how different projects fared in their attempts to engage young people within certain contexts, but also which aspects of participation young people found relatively attractive or unappealing within particular participatory contexts. Naturally, this second set of concerns is primarily examined



through the prism of the concept of *musical habitus*. One consistent set of themes running through the ensuing analysis then, concerns the ways in which the classificatory and evaluative operations of the *musical habitus*, when they interact with particular participatory contexts, present a picture of participants as characterised by relative “constraint” or “autonomy”. That is to say, as shall be seen, the concept of *musical habitus* offers an invaluable means of discerning the significant influences on the views expressed by young people with regard to their participation and the ways these accorded with or adapted to the participatory contexts provisioned. Echoing the key aspects of *musical habitus* already outlined, these views touch upon such issues as classifications and evaluations of music teaching and learning practices, the orthodoxies of the genre-worlds adhered to and valued by young people, the relative importance of peer groupings, musical ties and further social relations, as well as the significant means through which actors derive meaning from their involvement in music-related activities.

Having inflected participants’ reactions to CM participation with such an analysis of the functioning of their *musical habitus*, what also becomes apparent is the extent to which participatory contexts could respond to the musical dispositions of participants and provide opportunities through which valued meanings and experiences might be produced. Finally, by combining an understanding of the autonomous or constraining features of the *musical habitus* and the ways in which they respond to key features of particular participatory contexts, it is possible to form a deeper understanding of the ways project outcomes were, and might be generated.

### **5.3.1 Bring that Beat Back! – Participation at Raby Street**

Due to the significant variance, over time, of the CM participatory context at Raby Street, participants’ reports of their involvement are correspondingly varied. This situation effectively provides us with two sets of participant reports; those relating to prior project participation under the leadership of CM practitioners Tony and Graham, and those more relevant to current participation. In what follows, I shall discuss these two periods of project activity separately.

Judging by the available reports and the enthusiasm with which they were provided, it can be said that the prior participatory format adopted at Raby Street largely succeeded in falling into line with the musical enthusiasms of the young people involved. That is, although the *musical habitus* of the young people at Raby Street affords only a relatively restricted range of musical activities (as was noted in Chapter 4), both Tony and Graham's CM sessions were successful in appealing to the lads' musical interests and aspirations. One of the centre's younger and more musically interested youth workers, Danny, who had also followed Tony's course, explained:

Tony's course was a brilliant course, it was, sometimes it was a bit collegey-type, do you know like, he got everyone to sit down with flip charts out, but it was a really, really good course, people seemed to learn really quick off Tony.

(Danny, Youth Worker, Raby Street)

Danny went on to tell me how the young people involved had all responded well to Tony's commitment; he was always early to sessions, was well prepared and made his structured approach transparent. The centre benefited too: "it did attract like other people, you know like friendship groups moved in and then that's when the centre became absolutely buzzin" (Danny). Danny compared Tony's approach to that of the current CM tutors:

The way Tony ran it...was a much better way of doing it. The young people picked up a lot more from it rather than you know, being sort of thrown onto the decks with like a five minute introduction to DJing and the use of the decks – the kids haven't got a clue, do you know what I mean?

(Danny, Youth Worker, Raby Street)

Then, as with the current crop of musically interested young people at Raby Street, what was particularly sought, certainly initially, was a thorough grounding in the basics of DJ equipment operation, in line with the DJing style of new monkey music.

- M You know the way you kind of learnt the DJing, would you have changed any of it now, looking back?
- R No. It was probably the best way. It was the right way to teach wa [us], so, cannot go wrong, you know what I mean, I'm good now, I've been taught and I do it my way now.
- (James, Raby Street, age 20)

The personal outcomes resulting from such learning activities for young men such as James were considerable;

- M What do you think you got out of it?
- R Skill. Talent. Talent that'll stick with you for the rest of your life. Like, it'll be with you, you'll know how to do it for all your life.
- (James, Raby Street, age 20)

In referring twice, in the above excerpt, to the fact that the skills he has learnt will remain with him for “the rest of your life”, James provides us with an insight into the degree of significance that such experiences continued to assume for him, even though his direct involvement in CM activities had ceased several years prior. Youth worker Danny’s reports of the changes he witnessed in project participants at this time reflect James’ positive assessment:

You do see a massive change in the young people when they are getting into music like, a huge change...it does increase your confidence by like loads...[they receive] lots of respect as well and I think they respect other people more...[for] James and that it was just a massive, massive confidence boost.

(Danny, Youth Worker, Raby Street)

With the successful acquisition of the technical skills necessary to manipulate their favoured musical style in their own way (“I do it my way now” – James), the older seniors at Raby Street went on to perform on a community radio station, visit another local youth centre where they practiced their skills as well as performing at several local music festivals and a professional music venue in the nearby Ouseburn Valley. From such performance opportunities, further outcomes subsequently developed. These touched not only those directly involved but also their musically interested friends; informal teaching and practicing went on in participants’ homes and further

performance events were later organised, some by the lads themselves (one in a local pub which is run by a participant's mother). While they still gave new monkey priority in their musical preferences, some of the older Raby Street lads, had also gone on to broaden their musical appetites somewhat; in essence, they became less easily challenged by other styles, more "open" to them, upon the basis of a securely achieved musical identity of their own.

After the older lads' had completed their training, Significant musical opportunities also arose for the local MCs, for whom no CM activities had been specifically provided; the youth centre's open sessions, thanks to the musical backing provided by the DJs, now offered a much sought-after musical space in which they could gather and practice together. When I asked these lads why they attended at all, it was clear what role the newfound buzz around the centre's music making activities played in their estimations:

M     What do you like about the centre then?

R     Well, I get to come here and listen to kind of music I like, get to have a shot on the mic, get to erm, see some DJs see what they're like, see if they can do some good mixing.

(Dave, Raby Street, age 16)

Well, its proper loud, they have it proper bangin' isn't it, so the mic just sounds really, you know...hard to describe...

(Paul, Raby Street, age 16)

Thus, although they were not directly involved in any of the CM sessions with the DJ tutors, the local MCs who now flocked to the centre on Monday evenings were also able to develop skills that provided pathways to further opportunities for them. One such MC, Paul, provides a good indication of how this functioned for him:

When I started coming down here I just got better and better basically. Because all of us used to do it that came down then, Steve an' all that used to hang around, and I thought, that's what I'm gonna do.

(Paul, Raby Street, age 16)

For Paul, the opportunity to practice and learn with peers naturally led on to the chance to gain performance experiences. I asked Paul what such opportunities meant to him:

Feel good. You feel good, its like...everyone's...ahhh, together - they feel good, an' I'm doing this, I'm up there doing that [emphasises 'I'm' both times].

(Paul, Raby Street, age 16)

Following such performances, Paul was able not only to develop new relationships but also a sense of personal efficacy and pride:

I've met loads of people. There's times when I've just been walking through the street and somebody will go to me "Aw, you done [performed at] that party at Dinnington didn't you?" and I'll go "Aye". Aw, its just, you know, you feel good, "cheers mate".

(Paul, Raby Street, age 16)

Naturally, this gave Paul, like others, a growing sense of self-esteem and a strong desire to gain further performance experiences: "Well I just wanna, I like doing MCing in front of an audience" (Paul). Indeed, being recognised and admired by other local young people for their musical performances emerged as one of the key mechanisms encouraging many of the older lads to perform more and continue improving their skills.

R     Aye, [you get] a bit of respect

M     How does that work?

R     It's like, dunno, I've had a few kids come up to us and says like "Aw you're MC \*NAME\* aren't you?" [and I say] "Aye", [then they] say like "You're good" or "You're wicked on the mic", like that sort of respect really.

(Steve, Raby Street, age 18)

While a firm grounding in DJing skills had opened out, for some of the older seniors, onto a range of music making opportunities and outcomes (with their MCing friends also benefiting), in the case of the younger seniors group, little learning progress was being made. As has been mentioned, the lack of consistency in approach coupled with periods of absence from the CM workers assigned to the project accounts for this learning shortfall in many respects.

M Would you like to do more [DJ learning] here if you had the chance?

R If I had the chance, yeah. But they haven't been in lately have they, doing the DJ sessions?

(Tony, Raby Street, age 14)

Craig [previous lead CM worker at Raby Street] used to come, used to do it on a Thursday night, after school so, we just used to come down all the time and then err, he stopped and that was it.

(Brian, Raby Street, age 14)

As the weeks and months passed with a neither fruitful nor reliable CM format emerging, slowly but surely the younger lads' frustration turned evermore into a rejection of the CM opportunities that were being intermittently made available. As a somewhat exasperated Brian told me: "[I] just wanna learn proper mixing". Naturally, this situation was not aided by the fact that, during the times when the current CM workers were present, the older lads would typically be engaged in their own music making elsewhere in the centre at the same time. The attraction of the older lads' activity to the centre's younger male group was far greater than that of the predominantly one-to-one tuition provided by the CoMusica CM practitioners. In this instance, a fuller appreciation of not only the Bourdieuan habitus of the young men of Byker, but also of their specific (and related) *musical habitus* was lacking on the part of the current CM project workers. That is, had the latter recognised the great significance of peer group relations underpinning the lads' attraction to new monkey, or taken notice of the lads' relative lack of ease in engaging with outside authority figures in one-to-one situations (i.e., in the absence of peer group members), a more appropriate approach to developing the younger lads' musical creativity could doubtless have been found. As it was, however, as numerous project formats were adopted and easy relations between the majority of the lads' group and the lead CM worker failed to develop, the lads increasingly showed signs of first resignation and subsequently antagonism toward the CM workers.

This situation came to a head when, after a difficult period for the project, one young man challenged the lead CM worker for his lateness and asked him whether he "even liked the monkey"; the response came in the negative with some rancour. Relations

between this CM practitioner and the younger lads appeared permanently damaged after this incident. Given the nature of their single-minded adherence to new monkey (i.e., the relative constraint characterising their *musical habitus*) any slight against it as a form of music and ultimately, lifestyle (in the eyes of the lads), could scarce be taken lightly. It was thus at this point that the chasm in understanding between the key CM worker's notion of appropriate forms of musical creativity and the lads' *musical habitus* was most fully revealed. In this way, while the informality, sense of ownership and familiarity of Raby Street as project setting, chimed in well with the strong sense of place, of empowerment and of group identity demanded by the affordances of the younger lads' *musical habitus*, in terms of the practices undertaken within CM sessions (little consultation with young people and appropriate youth workers, hence a lack of structured group-based learning, in turn leading to low participation, hence few further performance opportunities, hence no motivation reinforcement) too many significant variances stood in the way of the establishment of positive mechanisms within this participatory context. The outcomes of participation for the younger seniors were thus severely restricted, especially when compared to those generated with and by the older lads.

### **5.3.2 Hitting the Right Note – Participation in Wooler**

A most powerful aspect of participation in Wooler's SteelQuake project was band members' widely shared attitude of being "in the band". The extent to which this sets the SteelQuake project apart from the other projects studied cannot be understated. Where participants of other projects were more inclined to participate as and when they saw fit (to varying degrees), for SteelQuake players, band membership represented a significant commitment, and one whose nature, described by band captain Jake as "Helen's whole 'Attend practice every week' attitude", was not up for discussion. This situation had numerous repercussions for then-current band members and played a considerable part in the way this project encouraged participation/band membership.

In the main, the young people in the project positively viewed the fact that project participation was so demanding of their time. Given the relative lack of opportunities for socialising and youth participation available to young people in the Wooler area, that

the heavy involvement and commitment required should be largely welcomed by band members' ought to come as no real surprise:

I'm so involved in the project, spend most of my time playing steel pan or something, I just, I like the big commitment.

(Craig, SteelQuake, age 14)

Nevertheless, for those young people equally interested in other activities, the conditions of band membership/project participation have tended to require that sacrifices be made (these included dance lessons, sports team membership, horse riding lessons, spending time with friends, attending parties). In spite of this, however, participants consistently reported that their commitment had been rewarded.

Countless times I thought "Oh, maybes I should just quit, dunno if I wanna do this anymore, it's taking up so much time" and all this, "None of my mates do it" and all this, but I dunno, seems like certain things bring you back – gigs and going to Trinidad, all the opportunities.

(Jake, SteelQuake, age 14)

In this way, participation came to be seen by many as something of a two-sided coin – both rich with opportunities to gain much sought-after social and musical experiences (region-wide performances, heavy involvement in CoMusica regional network of CM projects, exchanges with London-based steel pan band Ebony, trips to Notting Hill Carnival and Trinidad) yet also highly demanding of time and energy.

That said, at the project's outset, heavy commitment was a less significant part of the project; at that time, participation more simply revolved around group steel pan playing and learning. This aspect of participation retains its strong appeal for participants today; numerous band members, and particularly those with high levels of prior instrument playing and learning experience, reported finding a great deal of satisfaction in simply learning and performing music together to a good standard. The pleasure of this experience alone was enough for many to find great benefits in the long and highly directed band practice sessions.



It's like really satisfying to, like after you've worked really hard, to hear how it sounds at the end.

(Rebecca, SteelQuake, age 12)

Undoubtedly, the high levels of prior musical ability and high standards of behaviour demonstrated by band members (aspects of their Bourdieuan and *musical habitus*) have been significant in the musical achievements witnessed in this project. Further factors, immanent to the playing of steel pans, also served to sustain the interest and involvement of many participants. For some, it was important that the steel pan, as an instrument, produces a pleasing and relatively easy-to-generate sound, while for others it was the distinction that came with playing a relatively unusual instrument ("we're unique to everything else" – Alice, age 12), for others again, the continuing challenge of learning a novel instrument and progressing at a steady rate was valued:

[I like] the sound, the things you get to play, like the learning of music...I just like it, learning music.

(Thomas, SteelQuake, age 14)

There are several ways in which these reports resonate with the salient aspects of this participant groups' prevalent *musical habitus* (as highlighted in Chapter 4). Here we might highlight the relative autonomy of participants' *musical habitus*, their "openness" to new musical styles and sounds (such as steel pan), the attention given, in their valuations, to music's purely sonic and aesthetic elements and their familiarity with learning music in quite directed, guided and "formal" ways (in contrast to the relative lack of formality involved in the activity of a self-taught bedroom guitarist for example). Indeed, the undaunted attitude with which participants have approached the sometimes significant musical challenges presented to them over the course of their participation also appears to have benefited from participants' predominantly successful prior encounters with musical instrument learning. Craig's perspective on this was typical: "The music, that side of it's really challenging, but I like being challenged" (Craig, age 14). In fact, on the whole, the successful negotiation of musical challenges as they arose, was presented as a further domain in which, qua participant, you "get to show off your talent" (Edwin, age 12).

As is alluded to above, not only the fact of its challenging nature, but also the way music learning takes place in SteelQuake accorded well with participants' dispositions. The particular teaching style of project/band leader, Helen, was recognised as most effective, mixing, as it does, the light-hearted and fun with the serious and directed:

[With] Helen, the thing is, she can draw a line if you know what I mean. She can be your friend and then she can also be the teacher, which is a completely different mood.

(Craig, SteelQuake, age 14)

Although, according to current participants, some previous band members had found her approach too uncompromising, present band members, as beneficiaries of both the intrinsic and further outcomes stemming from the attainment of a high performance standard, have come to respect Helen's adopted approach. Such is the enjoyment derived from learning and playing together that, for these project participants, the almost total absence of what might be seen as "creative" or "personally expressive" input into the band's musical activities is of no serious concern:

You're told, "you play this and you play this"...its not so much creation as carrying out someone else's creation but it still feels, gives you the same sort of buzz, it feels like that, you're definitely creating an atmosphere, creating sound.

(Jake, SteelQuake, age 14)

In a sense, the aforementioned openness, characteristic of these young people's approach to music learning appears to override concerns related to the "textual" or "representational" meanings associated with such an activity. That is, where young people place only low significance in the representational or textual meanings of their musical and music-related activity, it is perfectly understandable that a corollary of this is for musical activity to be used less as a means of necessarily personal or group expression. Since the SteelQuake members do not participate because they see the music they play or the activity they do as particularly representative of themselves or of their ideas, it would appear justifiable to assume that the representative or signifying function of music is, in terms of their CM participation, less important for them than the simple enjoyment of music playing. On the basis of both their deployment of musical

valuations and their estimations of participation, this situation can be seen to pertain on the part of the majority of SteelQuake participants.

As a consequence, the importance, to them, of retaining a sense of control over the expressive or meaningful content of their music making, can be described as low when weighed against the appeal of group music playing and learning (or compared to the attitudes of the lads at Raby Street). At the same time, such a consideration of the operations of these young people's *musical habitus* must also recognise the influence of the Bourdieuan habitus; effectively, the young people of Wooler were, on the whole, less hostile to ideas and influences unfamiliar to them than was the case at Raby Street. The relative ease and openness that characterised their approach to CM participation extended to other domains as well and ought, thus, be seen to have its roots in the Bourdieuan habitus. Both the Bourdieuan and *musical habitus* of participants therefore accorded well with the willingness, assumed of project participants, to abide by the decisions of the project leader ("well, you can be creative with your dancing" – Edwin, age 12).

The sphere of activity in which both participants of SteelQuake and their parents had more input was at the level of the practical and logistical. The youth/parent committee, for example, discussed such matters as the balance of practice/performance, the production of band recordings and a number of other fundamental issues relating to the operations and overall direction of the band. Given her wealth of experience and level of input into the project as a whole however, any proposals from the committee generally needed to secure CM practitioner Helen's agreement before being carried forward. In spite of this, participants maintained that they retained some sense of control over their musical activity (despite, such as in the following excerpt, clearly indicating how their "choice" was in fact a circumscribed one):

Helen never just turns up and says "We're learning this", well she does occasionally, but usually it's like, "Would you rather learn this tune or this tune?"

(Jake, SteelQuake, age 14)

Once more then, the necessary features of the participatory context, as it presented itself to potential participants<sup>62</sup>, can be seen to have accorded well with numerous elements of their Bourdieuan and *musical habitus*.

However, thanks in large part to the high performance standards achieved by the SteelQuake band (itself, doubtless aided by participants' acquiescence on matters creative), numerous associated outcomes were able to accrue for participants. Most relished the experiences gained on their trips away from Wooler and cited benefiting from the opportunities to meet young people from not only other parts of the country, but also other parts of the world, with several recognising how they had become more confident in their interactions with new people as a result. Through their performances and trips participants also recognised the value of being exposed to different forms of music and, for some, whole different ways of life and forms of culture. Indeed, the way this project was able to exploit links with Trinidad is a distinctive outcome of the musical form used within SteelQuake's participatory context. Here, the way that particular types of young people (rather than others) were initially attracted and subsequently remained involved with such a participatory context effectively signals how a project outcome such as "gaining an insider's understanding of another culture", could only have realistically been developed through the participation of young people with the inclination, perseverance, raw ability, prior musical knowledge, (in short the appropriate *musical habitus*), along with the necessary local (largely parental) and organisational support (£10,000 in capital funding) to make such opportunities a reality.

That said, numerous less project-specific outcomes were also in clear evidence at SteelQuake. These more personal, intrinsic effects of participation essentially relate to the kinds of learning derived from the successful achievement of tasks undertaken in consort with others. Thus participants related how a sense of personal and collective achievement had granted them a more developed sense of self-confidence:

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<sup>62</sup> Unfortunately, due to the difficulties in contacting participants who had quitted the project, there was no available means of verifying whether such aspects of the participatory context as the lack of control over its expressive elements did in fact prove an inhibiting factor for young people whose *musical habitus* was less characterised by what I have termed the "openness" of the SteelQuake project participants.

Just like, knowing that you're good at something, like if you're not very good at school for instance or something, and then you just know that you, for a fact, that you're good at something no matter what anyone else says, no matter what they say, no matter what you say, you know that you're good at that thing, aye, it's just something I realised.

(Thomas, SteelQuake, age 14)

According to many, such boosts in confidence had encouraged a further range of outcomes such as overcoming shyness, thereby facilitating better communication with others, in turn encouraging improved team working skills. Several also stated that they had learnt how taking responsibility provided intrinsic rewards and that determination, commitment and hard work would inevitably lead to worthwhile results.

It's raised my determination to do things you know, I've managed to now think, you know, I used to have some trouble setting my mind to something then doing it. SteelQuake has helped me a lot with determination you know, if I want to do something, I can do it now, I can just try and do it, I've learnt not to give up as much as I used to.

(Alex, SteelQuake, age 14)

Others found more immediate outcomes such as the friendships developed with other band members to be of greatest significance to them. Although outcomes such as these might be generated through participation in a range of activities, the particular group dynamic of steel pan band membership combined with the specific bonding effects of the experiences shared by these young people appeared to offer scope for the development of specifically relational as well as strictly individually experienced personal outcomes.

Naturally, numerous outcomes of a more specifically musical nature were also outlined. Musical theory, scales, technique and so on had all been improved, in many instances to the benefit of approaches towards other instruments. In other ways, participants expressed how not only their listening tastes, but also their musical appreciation, or "ear", had developed:

Now I always listen to the articulation of the beat because [there's] phrasing that I'd listen to a lot more...there's a lot of phrasing involved with the pans now, so I hear rhythm.

(Craig, SteelQuake, age 14)

Following Craig's participation, he, along with Jake, Alex and Samantha reported how they now aspired to make music a significant part of their future careers, an outcome which is a testament to the extent of the impact made by this project on its participants. The high degree of satisfaction derived purely from the music practice-related side of the project is further exemplified by the young people's responses to questions about how they thought the project might be improved. In these instances, suggestions such as longer band practices, more section practices (i.e., involving only the tenors or double seconds sections) and practices incorporating other styles of music were primary. The only other recommendations to be offered related to the SteelQuake panyard and its facilities. These suggestions indicate the continued primacy of strictly musical activities whose meanings reside most fully in the development of practical music making skill, and band achievement.

### **5.3.3 Different Hymn-sheets – Participation at Galafield**

Upon my first visit to Galafield, it was immediately apparent that the CM project there was experiencing difficulties in attracting and retaining participants; this much was clear from the fact that there were as many young people as there were adults involved in a project based, after all, in a busy youth centre. In spite of such heavy staffing, within this participatory context progress was intermittent and outcomes slow to materialise. A number of factors were at play here, yet at their root appeared to be the same problem of attracting participants, as a result of which, participant personalities and behaviour became central issues and project activities were subsequently too easily derailed or significantly held up.

One might have expected in-session relations to be easier; the four participating girls had been friends for some time and engaged in numerous out-of-school activities together. In spite of their long-held relationships with one another, there were considerable differences in opinion and attitude between the girls; attitudes towards school and achievement, future careers, music listening and, significantly, music-

making. Lisa attempted to explain: “we can't work together in a group, we're always arguing and err, we cannot decide on anything, we've got like different, like, points of view if you know what I mean”. As a result of their differences, the degree of variance evident in the girls’ estimations and reported experiences of participation are revealing, especially so in light of the differences in the girls’ Bourdieuan and *musical habitus*.

A first aspect of participation reported in conflicting ways by the girls concerns the nature of the outcomes deriving from their participation. For three of the four girls, the significance of the outcomes they reported was slight to negligible. Though Caroline had, for example, become more habituated to addressing large audiences thanks to her musical performance experiences, the significance of this was perceived to be low:

- M     Has it had any effect on you, has it changed you do you think?
- R     Not really.
- M     Not even in a little way?
- R     No, I'm still the same.

(Caroline, Galafield, age 13)

It was Elizabeth who was the sole project participant to see the outcomes of her participation as in any way influential or significant within the context of the rest of her life. She had been involved with the girls’ strand of the project at Galafield since it had begun around three years prior, effectively becoming the most reliable and consistently dedicated participant of all the girls attending the centre. Consequently, her relationship with the CoMusica workers was much more developed than was the case for her co-participants and it was Elizabeth who was regularly selected to act as a representative of the Galafield project (such as at the CoMusica Youth Steering Group meetings), as well as representing CoMusica in a national event (Cre8 project<sup>63</sup>). Elizabeth subsequently viewed her participation as something that had become an important part of both her musical and extra-musical activities, providing several personally valuable outcomes:

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<sup>63</sup> The Cre8 project was conceived to celebrate the launch of the 20th Youth Music Action Zone in England. 60 young people, aged 14-18, were brought together and divided into eight groups according to geographical location. Each group had the responsibility of writing, rehearsing and recording an original track for the Cre8 album with support from some of the biggest names in contemporary British music.

[My participation has] give[n] us [me] more confidence in talking to people and performing and it's just helped with like my knowledge of music and stuff...I know more about what goes into the making of a song, I appreciate it more, cos I know it's a lot of hard work...I don't slate [criticise] music as much now.

(Elizabeth, Galafield, age 14)

A further variation in the girls' responses to participation concerned the matter of their control and influence over the nature of their participation. In this matter, Elizabeth's approach was both pragmatic and tactical; understanding well the rules of engagement, she showed an ability to manage the group's deliberations in line with her interests, yet to concede ground when necessary:

M Do you feel you get to have a say in the music activities, enough of a say in what goes on and what gets done?

R I make sure I get it. If I've got something that I want to be said and I want it then I'll just say it. I make sure I'll have it said.

M Ok, so if you want something changed you think you can make it change?

R Well I'll mention it and that and I'll just keep pushing the point and then hopefully it'll get changed eventually, if not then I'll just have to compromise what I want, so I'm still like getting it a little bit.

(Elizabeth, Galafield, age 14)

In contrast, both Caroline and to a greater extent, Lisa, felt much less able to direct the group's activities in line with their particular interests and designs. For Caroline, whose in-session participation largely consisted of working on vocal duets with Elizabeth (to CM worker Emma's piano accompaniment), things had been moving too fast in a certain direction (one over which she had no sense of control) for some time now:

I've kind of been thrown in at the deep end kind of thing...like we weren't doing the music that long before we did wa first performance, Emma was just like, "Oh, there's a performance coming up" and "Are yous gonna perform?" kind of thing. But we felt like we didn't really have a choice.

(Caroline, Galafield, age 13)



Lisa's sentiments echo those of Caroline; both girls portray their positions as more subjugated than necessarily empowered. In the following excerpt Lisa expresses her dismay at the situation:

There's, there's always like, making one song and then straight onto the next one is more important than our say really...I'd rather make videos and stuff like that but we cannot make videos because Emma is being too serious and she's concentrating on making the songs and once we've made the songs it's straightaway onto the next song.

(Lisa, Galafield, age 13)

While Lisa certainly recognised and valued the scope for expression afforded through song writing, this activity was seen, in line with the significant attributes of her *musical habitus*, as only one amongst several channels through which valued meanings might be explored through music (for Lisa, 'look' or dress, dance and style of self-presentation appeared equally significant). In terms of undertaking music or song making activities, Lisa's *musical habitus* appeared relatively constraining – she still appeared to lack the confidence in approaching music making to pursue it in so avid a way as to expose her self-esteem to harm, were she to fail. Having spent the greatest part of her participation engaged in a largely textual approach to song writing however, Lisa, like Elsa, was keen that her participation now come to involve more means of creating and exploring musical meaning; principally means which were more directly and immediately accessible to her ("making a [music] video, T-shirts..." – Lisa). By contrast, Elizabeth's expectations and interests were much more in tune with those of the project. Indeed, the extent to which Elizabeth's musical values, aspirations and estimations chimed in with those of the project leader and were responded to by the latter, caused the rest of the group to complain of favouritism:

She [Emma] wasn't really interested like, everything I said she wasn't really bothered...and like, everything I did she was like "Well, we'll ask Elizabeth. Elizabeth, what do you think about it?" and everything Elizabeth said she was just like "Oh yeah, write it down, write it down"...she liked Elizabeth, treated her like a favourite.

(Caroline, Galafield, age 13)

The degree of variance in the girls' experiences is perhaps most marked however, in their estimations of the CoMusica Gatherings. These quarterly events effectively provided the only opportunities for the Galafield girls group to perform publicly and to meet other young people from the CoMusica network. As such they formed a significant aspect of the girls' participation. Elizabeth, generally found the gatherings valuable and enjoyable; having developed friendships within the CoMusica network over the course of previous months and years, she found them to be socially and musically rewarding occasions. For the other girls in the group, simply fitting in at such events was a far from straightforward matter, and one amplified by feeling as though they had been left behind by their more out-going co-participant.

Everyone was in big groups and there was just like me, Elsa, and Lisa sitting in the corner...Elizabeth just fucked off and she went with all her other friends.

(Caroline, Galafield, age 13)

Indeed, one gets the impression that, for Lisa and Elsa more so than Caroline and Elizabeth, fitting in was not even something they would have necessarily wanted to do, had they been able.

M     You know the gatherings, do you like them? What do you think of them?

R     Absolutely boring.

(Lisa, Galafield, age 13)

Although Lisa did recognise the value of the socialising opportunities facilitated by such gatherings (especially opportunities for meeting lads), they still sat uneasily with her on the whole. Undoubtedly important, in explaining her general distaste for the gatherings, was the fact that she would usually be expected to perform a short piece, along with Elsa, on which they had been recently working together. This was a major sticking point in Elsa and Lisa's participation, setting them in some conflict with CM project leader Emma. While Emma appeared to view participants' performance at gatherings as both indicative of current project success as well as a spur to further achievement, Lisa and Elsa viewed such opportunities with great reticence and anxiety.

The situation was, to some extent, understandable. For one thing, the girls had only minimal prior performance experience and were evidently nervous to the point of discomfort when performing. Secondly, in the case of Lisa and Elsa's songs, performances consisted of vocal pieces with only a sparse (one might say under-developed) piano or guitar accompaniment. This is not necessarily the way the girls wished to present themselves and their chosen music ("[we want to be] getting better tunes on the laptop instead of just guitar" – Lisa), yet due to their own lack of musical ability, together with the inappropriateness of rapper Phil's and music graduate Jane's specific skills, not to mention the absence of appropriate facilities (i.e., a laptop computer), there seemed little chance of changing the situation. Consequently, for Lisa and Elsa, performance produced the opposite of its intended effect; their confidence withered and left them feeling vulnerable and unworthy.

R      I was scared in the first place and just [thinking] proper "Oh, it's a crap song"

...

M      What about afterwards did you feel...

R      Really glad it was over and done with.

M      Really? Did it make you want to do it again though?

R      No, not really.

(Lisa, Galafield, age 13)

Undoubtedly Lisa and Elsa's songs were not as well prepared as they could have been, and the girls efforts during sessions did little to help matters, yet their level of self-criticism was also striking. Indeed, feelings of low personal efficacy are typical of the habitus of very many of the girls (and lads) attending the Galafield centre; the expressive arts, as a domain towards which few feel a "natural" inclination, are seen by many as ripe with opportunities for failure. Lisa and Elsa, despite their willingness to participate in the project, were no different in this regard; when creative participatory opportunities were put before them, poor behaviour often instinctively emerged as a means of masking fears of failure and inadequacy. Therefore to be asked to perform at events attended by more experienced and practiced peers, in an activity towards which one has an almost instinctive reaction of personal inferiority, and for which one feels ill prepared, is a particularly challenging prospect for teenage girls such as Elsa and Lisa. Indeed, even for the somewhat more self-assured Caroline, who had many more reasons

to feel confident about the pieces she and Elizabeth had developed with CM worker Emma, the challenge presented by performance remained nevertheless a significant one:

I felt more nervous [performing] on the first one...because like there was loads of people there...it didn't feel very good.

(Caroline, Galafield, age 13)

As more performance opportunities loomed up on the horizon, Lisa and Elsa sought to find ways of continuing their involvement, yet without having to confront the quasi-obligatory performance situation. To negotiate this problem, they declined the opportunities to work on new songs in sessions and flat refused to perform old ones. Through these and other stalling techniques they managed to dodge the task of performing. A further issue arose at the next gathering however, this time resulting from several of the girls' smoking outside the venue. This incident brought them into conflict with a member of the CoMusica staff:

She [CoMusica employee] was saying that we were the worst group and we caused the most trouble and stuff like that, in public, so she spoilt wa [our] day...it made wa feel like we were just rubbish, and we meant nothing...it was just horrible.

(Lisa, Galafield, age 13)

While Lisa, Elsa and Caroline were being reprimanded for their behaviour, Elizabeth was making the most of the occasion: "everyone was drinking their non-alcoholic cocktails and that and just having a mint time, I was dancing around..." (Elizabeth). The feelings of inadequacy that plagued Lisa and Elsa's attempts to integrate themselves into unfamiliar settings were of key importance in setting their whole experiences of participation apart from those of more confident and out-going young people such as Elizabeth. Where the former, feeling easily out of place, instinctively react to new or challenging situations with trepidation and hostility, Elizabeth employs a consistent strategy for overcoming any shortfalls in confidence; faith in herself.

- M Do you think you need that kind of determination and confidence?
- R Well otherwise you would just get so far and just change and be like "Nah, I couldn't do this", I mean I know that if I had done that I would just regret it, whereas no matter how scared I might be at the time, I know that I'll come out of it and I'll be like "Thank god I didn't turn away"

(Elizabeth, Galafield, age 14)

Elizabeth related several instances in which she had needed to actively employ such resolve to overcome the perceived obstacles of certain aspects of her participation. This alone gives an indication of the sorts of challenges facing less psychologically buoyant young people such as Lisa and Elsa. Given the primacy of such matters in dictating the nature and extent of positive project outcomes, it appears that the most pertinent issues for the Galafield project to address concern the creation of a form participation that appeals to more young people. Naturally, given the make-up of the young people using the Galafield centre, this may mean working, certainly initially, in ways that serve to rebuild such young people's already diminished confidence.

#### **5.3.4 Rock and a Hard Place – Participation at Redcar**

Although there were occasional collaborations (in terms of working practices and in-session activity) between the two groups at Redcar, for the sake of clarity, in what follows I deal with the lads' and the girls' strands separately. To take the girls' experiences of participation first, while this strand appeared to be functioning successfully at first sight, upon further investigation it emerged that several disagreements and poorly aligned agendas pertained. These disagreements largely concerned the musical material that the group was working on, the way they worked on it, as well as issues surrounding performance and project commitment. Indeed, the state of the girls' group, as it was upon my arrival, was actually already a result of one prior power struggle.

Everyone says it [the CM activity] got took over by year 9s...we were more dominant than anyone else...it dropped down to about 5 people, and we liked it like that cos there was no one else to put us off or anything...you could get a lot more stuff done and you can go [to] more places...with a lot of people it would cost more and it would be more, it would just be a lot more faff-on [effort involved].

(Andrea, Redcar, age 14)

The “dominant” group to which Andrea is here referring included herself and four friends. These girls appeared to value relatively unchallenging opportunities to work on vocal parts to popular songs together – a format essentially corresponding to somewhat romantic ideals of musical activity, typical of a performing arts academy (in, for example, valorising purity, clarity and strength of voice, harmony). As one of their number, Jane (age 13) put it, “we’ve got a good sound when we’re singing”. This status quo was not to the liking of all participants however. Two of the groups more high-spirited members, Charlotte and Rachel, though they still enjoyed participating, stressed how they thought that the range of music being used in sessions was narrow and were concerned over their lack of influence over either the choice of music to be used in sessions or the way in which it would be used.

R        It’s too slow, it’s soppy

...

M        So what would you rather do?

R        I dunno, something like, I dunno some pop, faster music...if I  
could change it, I'd change all the music

(Rachel, Redcar, age 12)

The differences in the two sets of girls’ musical and participatory values were obvious; while Andrea (who had aspirations to go on to act, dance and sing on stage) and her friends sought a more directed and passive role through which they hoped to improve their singing voices, Charlotte and Rachel were more interested in manipulating lyrical content, varying performance styles and playing with music’s visually representative elements (some of the most potent features of early 21<sup>st</sup> century pop/rock). Unfortunately for Charlotte and Rachel, the particular strengths and musical ideals of the CM project leader and her co-workers accorded best with those of Andrea and her dominant friendship group. Besides, as Andrea told me, she and her friends were far better behaved and more willing to learn than Charlotte and Rachel:

Charlotte and Rachel used to start laughing and giggling and like Sue [CM Worker] might have said "Stop it" but then they used to carry on and it would get on our nerves cos we couldn't learn anything...

(Andrea, Redcar, age 14)



Where at first the sessions had been valued as “just a bit of fun” (Theresa), a space in which the girls could sing together and “have a laugh” (Charlotte), as more performance opportunities were arranged by the CM workers, “it got serious” (Theresa) to such an extent that group’s suggestions were now rarely heeded (“sometimes they [CM workers] can ignore you if they don’t want to do something” – Jane) and the pressure to perform well had increased significantly: “when the class can’t pick an idea up they [CM workers] get really, really, really agitated” (Rachel).

Err, we’re getting a bit fed up of it, sometimes you just wanna have a laugh and they [CoMusica workers] want you to work, but you just want to try other things.

(Jane, Redcar, age 13)

In fact, participants voiced a number of concerns about the extent of CM worker control over numerous aspects of participation. Following the unsuccessful performance of a piece Emma had chosen to rearrange shortly beforehand: “we just ruined it and we hated her, hated Emma” (Charlotte). The usually subdued Theresa was also surprisingly vocal, and clearly somewhat upset as she elaborated what she termed the “awkward vibe” perceptible during sessions:

You get the feeling that they [CM workers] like [some] people and they don’t like [other] people, and with Charlotte and Rachel you always feel that just, I can’t explain it, but you always get the feeling that they just, she [Emma] just hates them.

(Theresa, Redcar, age 13)

Many of the above comments came as a surprise; while it was clear from my observations that the CM workers certainly held a fairly tight rein on in-session activities, the girls did still appear to enjoy the opportunities made available through participation (especially working together and meeting people at gatherings and events) and also reported positive outcomes of their participation, relating primarily to boosts in confidence and vocal skills:

[I’m] more confident on stage and speaking in front of lots of people and stuff

(Jane, Redcar, age 13)



It's like really picked up my voice and all my talents that I've actually had hidden away for some years.

(Andrea, Redcar, age 14)

Overall however, the ostensible passivity of the majority of the girls towards their musical activities was not necessarily supported by a willingness to learn in the kind of focussed way assumed by the CM practitioners. The upshot of this situation was a tangible resentment on the part of some of the girls at feeling underrepresented. The situation was a difficult one to resolve; the majority of the girls group, despite their feelings to the contrary, did continue to acquiesce to Emma and Sue's proposals. The latter can scarce be judged too harshly for their efforts to move the group forward. Indeed, Theresa honestly recognised that the girls' susceptibility to pressure had eventually caught up with them; "I don't know if we put the effort in to find something [else] really, [so] they [CM Workers] keep telling you [proposing] something". As they did however suggest (albeit outside of the CM sessions), one way to re-energise the project would be to "include more things and like, include more song writing" (Charlotte), and "give it [use] more types of music, definitely" (Jane). While the apparently few constraints embedded in the girls' *musical habitus* meant that they were largely happy to adapt to CM provision then, there was a sense in which this situation stunted their initiative, gradually leading some of the girls to see their participation as more demanding than necessarily rewarding.

In comparison to the uneasy acquiescence that characterised the girls' sessions, the lads were much more single-minded about their music making. Indeed, for much of the time I spent at Redcar, the lads were, as one of them put it, largely "working away from the main part of the group" (Joe, age 14). Indeed, it is debatable whether the young men in question could, during this time, have been considered project participants at all. Although the two project strands had collaborated on several occasions in the past, initially their connection to the girls' activities seemed loose and their relations with the CM workers slight to non-existent. Despite being left to their own devices in their practice room, the lads worked away contentedly, writing songs and rehearsing cover

versions. As Matthew told me, this was something with which the lads were quite familiar and not altogether unhappy:

M Do you enjoy it more when you get to do more of your own thing or when there's some guidance there?

R Erm, own thing is better...but it's always good to have someone, if there's someone there who knows, you always take notice of what they say, cos you get nowhere just blanking, you're always learning.

(Matthew, Redcar, age 16)

When a CM worker was eventually allocated to the lads group, around halfway through my time at Redcar, the working format of their sessions altered little. The CM worker, who, over the course of approximately six sessions, showed the lads how they could record their music on computer, set up microphones properly and so on, served to supplement and support their activity rather than seek to direct it:

We get to record what we want, say if we want to do a song, we get to do the song, there's no boundaries really...you choose the songs, which is the best [thing] about it.

(Joe, Redcar, age 14)

We just get in there and we're allowed to bash out anything we like and record it.

(Matthew, Redcar, age 16)

With the new CM worker present, a larger working space<sup>64</sup> was opened up for the lads use and they were picking up skills that they saw as directly relevant to their interests.

M So you enjoy learning the technical skills?

R Yeah...[things] that I'd want to do.

(Joe, Redcar, age 14)

Finally, it appeared, the lads' interests were being much more closely responded to; they appeared much more engrossed during sessions and were gearing up for further performances together. As I asked the lads what they preferred most about their CM participation, it was clear that musical performance and practice, along with developing

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<sup>64</sup> In this instance the school's attached youth block was made available for CoMusica's CM activities.

friendships were most significant for them – these were of central importance in light of the evaluations of their *musical habitus* and are key attributes of the rock genre-world more generally speaking:

You do plenty of concerts, you get known, you get better at music...  
(Sam, Redcar, age 14)

The people, the song writing, the gigs that we do, the rehearsals...  
(Matthew, Redcar, age 16)

In terms of what the lads felt they had gained through their participation, performance confidence rated highly as did the opportunities, predominantly taken up by Matthew and Sam, to participate in the wider CoMusica network events. Matthew was clearly in his element at the gatherings “I get to do everything on it. Walk about and play guitar and then play some drums if I want to, its really good”, while Sam had really enjoyed his time with the CoMusica Youth Steering Group: “you get to do a concert on the Saturday night and do a bit of recording...talk to your new friends, get involved in the group”.

Overall, the lads’ accounts of their participation gave me the impression that they valued the opportunity to extend the breadth of their musical activities; having overcome the initial problems associated with facilities, they now found much of what they sought through their musical practices (performance opportunities, skills learning, friendship) could be enhanced through their CM participation. While the operations of the lads’ *musical habitus* thus led to them to hold a strong allegiance to their favoured musical genre, the strength of this allegiance was keenly influenced by a view of music-related activity as intimately related to the brokering of new social networks and, unlike at Raby Street, tempered by an appreciation of the values of certain other musical genres. In approaching participatory opportunities then, the relative constraint characterising aspects of the Redcar lads’ attitudes blends with autonomy in a far from straightforward manner.

#### **5.4 Power, Participation, and *Musical Habitus***

The words of Jake and Lisa, presented at the head of this chapter, remind us that the variation in significance of the outcomes generated for participants was great. Admittedly, there are very many aspects of projects that might serve to distinguish them and help us explain this; Jake's SteelQuake and Lisa's Galafield projects were informative of some of these. Still, in some senses, we must honestly confront the fact that further differences, those relating to the integration of young participants with particular participatory contexts, play a decisive part in dictating the nature and extent of project outcomes. For instance, had a steel pan band project been located at Galafield, Lisa and many of her peers would most likely have eschewed the opportunity to participate. Some of the reasons for this lie embedded in the *musical habitus*, concerning things such as young people's prior experiences of music learning and the nature of music's role in their social ties and significant peer group formations. Beneath those aspects of *musical habitus* directly relating to matters musical however, lie the elements shared with actors' Bourdieuan habitus; implicated here are matters as fundamental as young people's expectations of themselves, their aspirations, their responses to challenge and the way they respond to authority figures. Such factors go well beyond a concern for strictly "musical" or even "music-related" aspects of actors' lives, yet, as a general rule, they can play a powerful underlying role in determining the way young people engage with, amongst other things, musical activities.

This "way" is essentially what the concept of *musical habitus* seeks to elaborate. In the case studies explored above, the variety of such "ways" has been evident in how young people have related their experiences of CM participation, the issues that have assumed principal importance for them and the outcomes they have subsequently enjoyed. Thus despite the relatively preliminary nature of my inquiries, a series of primary considerations, borne out of each young person's *musical habitus*, and leading them to view their CM participation in certain, variable ways, is hereby proposed. While these concerns held different levels of importance for the different project participants, they are raised and discussed below for the purpose of illustrating the degree of variability between their valuations and estimations, in short the dispositions embedded in varying *musical habitus*.

As is shown by Hart's 'Ladder of Child Participation' (Figure 2.2) the question of power over, or ownership of participatory projects is a fundamental component of all forms of participation. Although the projects discussed in this thesis each seek to engage primarily with young people (thereby implying something less than the possibility of a purely equitable power relationship between all actors involved), matters related to the ownership over the direction of the project, determination of its goals and objectives and the methods to be used to achieve these remained crucial to many participants' experiences of participation. They also impacted upon project outcomes. That said, for other participants, such concerns were relatively peripheral. So how and why was the matter of power or ownership so variably significant, and what might this tell us about certain young people's participation?

Essentially, what we are dealing with, in attempting to understand the dynamic of power within projects, is the question of how young people viewed their musical activity and which aspects of it they valued and sought to retain control over. Thus at Raby Street, while the lads showed low interest in discussing the direction the project might best take or how they, as participants, could best feed into a decision making process, when it came to the kind of music to be used during CM sessions and events, the lads' desire to retain exclusive control acted like a necessary condition of their involvement. This situation can be explained by recognising that the *musical habitus* of the Byker lads typically saw this form of music as a significant statement of their voices<sup>65</sup>, their lives and their experiences. New monkey is also intimately bound up with a number of significant rituals and practices within the local musical youth culture of Byker; to participate in a project whose musical form was imposed arbitrarily from outside would run contrary to the loyalty or allegiance to new monkey music expressed by many. Indeed, if it were initiated, such a participatory project would be likely viewed as an unwelcome imposition and would certainly not be attended by many of the young men I spoke with at Raby Street. Already then we can see how the choice of musical form to be used in CM sessions, within specific settings, serves to attract some young

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<sup>65</sup> The loud volumes at which new monkey music is often played might, indeed, be viewed as a literal expression of the lads' desire for physical influence over their environment, space or territory.

people rather than others. The extent to which projects take account of the prevailing interest of different groups of young people will also bear a strong influence upon the make-up of project participants; where less choice or control is offered to young people and the nature of CM provision fails to accord with their interests one of two possible outcomes is likely. One is that the young people participating will tend to be those for whom decision making and influencing the direction of their musical activity is relatively unimportant (less important, say, than simply making friends or producing a valued musical product of one form or another). A second and related outcome is that where young people who are happy to give decision making relevant to their musical activities over to adults are thinner on the ground, within particular host communities, levels of participation can be expected to remain low.

Any project hoping to engage young men within youth cultural contexts like that of Byker must thus be willing to devolve a great deal of choice over music form to potential participants. A corollary of this situation is that the strong associations of this musical genre-world (youth peer-centred, hedonistic and largely self-directed) result in adherents often showing disdain towards authority figures and an unwillingness to be easily conscribed into *their* vision of musical and cultural creativity. In this instance then, certain ways of engaging young people in participation may, certainly initially, be doomed to certain failure by virtue of simply failing to take account of strongly held genre-world orthodoxies, themselves so strongly held by virtue of the underlying *musical habitus*.

Importantly, however, this does not render the potential input of CM workers peripheral – it simply recommends an approach underpinned by a sense of respect towards the often significant aesthetic and lifestyle forms cherished by such young people, however disparaged they may be by other sections of society. Indeed, as was clear from the accounts offered by participants to the previous CM project at Raby Street, in terms of learning and teaching styles, the lads involved were happy to learn in a small “class”-style, with a “teacher” stood before them demonstrating key ideas with the aid of only one set of record decks and a flip chart. There was no sense in which participation needed to be highly informal, loosely structured or overly accommodating of young

people's social lives. In fact, what appeared to be of more crucial importance was the willingness, on the part of the CM practitioners, to recognise participants' strongly held musical identifications and to respond to these in a serious and sustained manner. In essence, what these young people responded to most effectively was a sense of respect for their musico-cultural identity and recognition of who and where they were.

In the case of the SteelQuake project, the way participants sought to dispose of power, or a sense of ownership, was very different. Indeed, the participants of this project were clearly very different sorts of young people from those at Raby Street and their use of music, the role it played in their lives, was correspondingly different; less an expression of local peer group solidarity or personal lifestyle-cum-ethical stance than a domain in which to challenge oneself, through which be exposed to new and varied experiences, to find friends and, often, earn the pride of one's parents. Here matters such as genre associations or textual and representative musical meanings held far less significance than the fact of playing and learning more about music, together with others, on a unique and interesting-sounding instrument. That SteelQuake participants offered considerable commitment to a project that had no prior local connection or social role in Wooler's youth culture is instructive; the defensive, insular and territorial posture adopted by the young people of Byker was in no way evident here. These young people were also happy to accept responsibilities and follow instructions (and help make a series of pragmatic decisions in formal committee meeting settings), despite being largely denied input on musical matters. Participants here did not seek, then, to participate in music making activities as a means of making a statement – they were interested in it more for its immanent properties.

At Redcar, the lads strand of the project shared many features, in terms of power relations, with the Raby Street project; the lads' creative activities were largely self-directed and embedded in a network of significant life-style associations. An important difference however concerns the way the lads' rock music activity was validated (i.e., afforded time and space to develop) within the context of the school. This rendered the CM activity more amenable to the influence of authority figures. Consequently, towards the close of my fieldwork, the project was developing in a way beneficial to both CM

workers, the lads themselves, and the school. That said, it must be admitted that the objectives of all the parties involved were more broadly aligned than was the case at Raby Street, Galafield or with the Redcar Girls. This adds a further level of complexity to the picture; one whereby the specific nature of young people's salient genre-world associations must be considered in depth and within specific contexts in order to understand what the ensuing autonomy or constraint affords those young people, in terms of what they view to be "excluded, as unthinkable" (Bourdieu, 1990: 54).

For the girls at Redcar, as with the girls at Galafield, the matter of power and ownership over the project and its activities was more problematic. There were several interconnected reasons for this. For one thing, in both instances participants recognised (either explicitly or implicitly) how, in becoming the project's "dominant group", their actions served to deny other young people access to the participatory space. Already, then, power was a significant factor in controlling access to the CM activities and rendering the participatory context, in one way or another, exclusionary. Indeed, exclusionary process, of varying sorts, functioned across all projects; at Raby Street, in-group membership was key, although not critical, in gaining access to music making equipment, while at Wooler, the project's meritocratic system, whereby access to further opportunities was, as Helen put it "not based on age, its based on [musical] ability..." appeared to have functioned in deterring the continued participation of less musically able young people during the project's first months.

Beyond this however, neither at Galafield nor Redcar were the girls' groups able to gain the sort of influence over their participation that they appeared to seek. The majority of the members of both groups expressed a desire to engage in musical and creative activities beyond the scope of their current participation yet found the influence of the CM workers unduly restrictive in this regard. In part, this situation can be attributed to the fact that the CM workers largely sought to encourage both sets of girls' enjoyment and ability in predominantly sonic aspects of music making (by seeking to improve the quality of participants' vocal performances). Fundamental to such clashing agendas (and taken up at greater length in Chapter 6), are the varying objectives of CM workers and project participants. While the former were keen to generate musical achievement



and prepare participants for successful performances, participants, whose valued musical meanings were relatively disparate and diverse (drawing upon textual and representative meanings) sought activities that would introduce them to a greater breadth of music-related phenomena. Perhaps more importantly, however, issuing from the accounts gathered was the general perception that their participation should place greater emphasis on something that they increasingly lamented the absence of: fun. What this suggested was an approach to CM participation that provided options to young people and that *played* with different sources of musical meaning and significance (sound, image-text, the social).

Thus while neither group of girls could be said to hold clear affiliations with one particular musical genre-world (as did the lads involved in this study), several of the specific difficulties arising (personality clashes, participants feeling pressurised, slow progress, low enthusiasm) nevertheless appeared to derive, to a significant extent, from a basic dispute over the distribution of power to influence participatory processes. More fundamental than the matter of “genre” per se then, are young people’s underlying interests, uses and intentions in approaching musical and music-related activities. The ways to assure usually disempowered young people an important sense of ownership of and attachment to a project, is (in line with best practice principles advocated by prior community arts studies) to encourage group ownership of process and product, provide participants with meaningful levels of participation, and to see artists as collaborators rather than leaders (Williams 1997b).

The sort of correlations emerging from the above discussion, concerning the strength of participants’ genre affiliations and the degree of autonomy characteristic of their *musical habitus* are presented in Table 5.3 (below).

Table 5.3: *Musical Habitus* and Genre Saliency Relationships in Case Studies

		Prevailing features of <i>Musical Habitus</i>	
		“Open/Autonomous”	“Closed/Constrained”
Genre saliency	Low	SteelQuake	Redcar Girls Galafield Girls
	High	Redcar Boys	Raby Street (younger) Raby Street (older)

While this table usefully summarises where the different project participants stood with respect to genre saliency and the relative autonomy of their *musical habitus*, several additional points merit brief mention. Firstly, in stipulating genre saliency as relatively high or low, we lose much of the interesting empirical detail relevant to different musical genre related activities which, as such, could give the misleading impression that one “genre” is much the same as any other – as I have been keen to stress throughout, this is far from necessarily the case. Secondly, we should not be fooled into thinking that the lines of division between the four categories above are fixed; as is indicated by “Raby Street (older)” box above, there is scope for participants to develop greater autonomy in their *musical habitus* and for genre saliency to diminish. The table nevertheless presents a useful shorthand means of indicating the kinds of relationships emerging from the above analysis.

Given this picture of the relative constraint or autonomy embedded in young people’s *musical habitus* and the ways genre saliency plays a part in this, we might now turn our attention to some of the broader influences upon project participant make-up and examine their relationships to *musical habitus*. Immediately in need of highlighting here is the way key correspondences emerged between the projects and the *musical habitus* of their participants. In attempting to explain such connections we might immediately draw the reader’s attention to the effects of a number of brute structural factors as they

relate to particular social milieus. Thoroughgoing socio-economic and “spatial” factors, for example, served to influence projects’ participant make-up in undeniably significant ways. Consider the economics of a primary musical socialisation – the cost of private music lessons – or the effects of geographical proximity on Wooler’s as opposed to Byker’s young people for an idea of how broad contextual factors tended to feed into participants’ *musical habitus* and the challenges or successes subsequently encountered through participation.

These same socio-economic and geographical features also served to influence, again in less than straightforward yet nevertheless *patterned* ways, such factors as the nature of local youth cultural contexts, their associated problems (or relative lack of these), the ways participants approached formal education and the levels of support offered by participants’ parents for their children’s music making. Multiple factors serving to structure important features of CM projects, the raw human materials with which they work and the levels of social capital embedded in host communities, emerge as interlinked then, in coherent ways. Essentially, once we step back from the idiosyncratic aspects of projects and their participants, it becomes clear that what must be addressed in CM providers’ attempts to engage groups of young people in participation, are whole musico-cultural and social contexts. Each such context is endowed with particular characteristics to which CM provision, in order to meet with success (in terms as basic as encouraging the sustained participation of an appropriate number of participants) must, to varying degrees, reflexively adapt.

Levels of participant engagement with CM projects and the nature of the outcomes subsequently derived, thus depend, in part, upon a chain of compound factors that respond, in important ways, to structural features of specific communities and localities. The great divergences in the kinds of participatory processes established in the CM project located in the relatively affluent, rural Wooler and the deprived, suburban Galafield provide some preliminary insights into the ways in which such socio-economic and geographical features can bear influence<sup>66</sup>, even in what one would

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<sup>66</sup> Naturally, having only examined four cases of CM project activity in this study, any claims made with regard to the influence of various socio-economic and geographical settings are preliminary. Rather, my aim is to integrate the nature of several of the basic and well-recognised effects of, for example, socio-

normally assume to be somewhat nebulous ways: attitudes toward instrument playing or openness to unfamiliar styles of music.

Given the trends evidenced through the findings presented, some basic connections between elements of the *musical habitus* and socio-economic/geographical settings can be postulated. At their most basic, such trends suggest that a project in which participation requires of young people, prior to the commencement of their participation, an ability to approach musical instrument playing with some confidence may be less well placed to appeal to a broad base of young people in an economically deprived urban area. Accepting the basic premises of such thinking, it becomes easy to see how decisions about which kind of musical form and participatory style to develop within particular settings (rap project in a youth club/singing in schools/African drum playing in a community centre) will be of key importance in influencing typical project participant make-up. Where, for instance, the form adopted by a particular project, within a particular setting, fails to accommodate the predominant aspects of local young people's musico-cultural appetites, the type of provision ultimately made available may well be of only marginal appeal. This will typically imply that levels of youth participation will be lower. In situations where in-session process problems thus arise as a function of the limited number of participants drawn into participatory contexts, one means of overcoming these would appear to be the provision of activities with broader appeal to the majority of those young people who are likely to 'have had least access to creative opportunities, for reasons of economic, demographic or geographic exclusion' (CoMusica Overall Evaluation Document, Appendix I).

### **5.5 Community Music Participation: Conclusions**

Looking at projects in this way, seeing specific local conditions as both socially *structured* and subsequently *structuring* for young people's Bourdieuan and *musical habitus* (whilst keeping in sight the indeterminacy of such processes) also points up how some projects, rather than others, operate within communities where the majority of what we can term, in shorthand, "least access" young people, return home after their

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economic deprivation, or geographical remoteness and feed these into the current analysis for their hypothetical import.

CM sessions to relatively uninterested or unsupportive parents. At Raby Street for example, even though the project's prior incarnation successfully developed strong musical skills and other personal outcomes for participants, the extent of the deprivation (social, cultural, economic) affecting this neighbourhood, meant that the likelihood of parental involvement and support being forthcoming was low; this much was also clear from the ways participants related their parents' attitudes towards their "illegitimate" or "disvalued" musical activity. Taking CM provision as a given here (i.e., assuming an equal amount of funding and CM provider input for each project), such factors immediately set limits on the likelihood of projects developing intermediate or local community-level outcomes (such as were witnessed at Wooler) in two ways. Firstly, unless projects are successful in generating the involvement and support of local actors beyond the project partnership, they will be unable to count on additional support (such as parents might provide). Secondly, and related to the first point, this lack of adult involvement also sets limit upon the development of outcomes at the intermediate level of social network building and community cohesion; local community involvement thus feeds intimately into both project inputs and outcomes.

One significant element in the generation of such a breadth of outcomes at SteelQuake, for example, undoubtedly derived from the fact that the project successfully tapped into pre-developed pools of local skill and aptitude. This latent potential relates as much to participants, as it does parents, the project partner and the available facilities (such as, for example, the now-renovated tractor barn). The input of parents in particular, with their dependable logistical and practical support, facilitated the development of the project in ways that transcended the scope of what the project partnership alone could have achieved<sup>67</sup>. Indeed, the parents most intimately involved with the project also reported significant personal outcomes (pleasure, new experiences, friendship, recognition).

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<sup>67</sup> It might be noted here that a principal logistical concern, one whose pertinence initially served to draw participants' parents into the roles of helpers, was that of transporting £10,000 worth of steel pans from performance to performance. Indeed, it is questionable to what extent such a tangible investment into the Wooler community was an active element in encouraging the responsive involvement of local residents. Unfortunately, since no other project benefited from such a substantial capital investment, there is little scope for comparison.

Stepping back for a moment, one way of thinking about the way projects can actively tap into such reserves of talent and ability is to see these in terms of locally held pools of social and cultural capital. Where such social capital is under exploited within given settings (i.e., where local people, together, dispose of available time, money, energy and valuable skills), and when CM projects are successful at accessing this capital, the effect can be considerable. This asks us to consider the ways projects might access this capital, where, indeed, it exists in abundance. In Wooler, such parental involvement was generated by virtue of a number of factors. For one thing, being obliged to drive young people to and from the project, parents met, associated and shared thoughts and ideas relevant to their children's participation outside sessions. Secondly, the need for, or potential value of supplemental support could be clearly discerned by parents since the project required a great deal of logistical input in order to enable band performance. Importantly, the parents in Wooler also had valuable resources at their disposal (transport, organisation skills, time). Finally, the project's relatively loose affiliation to the local middle school provided scope for parental involvement.

Conversely, where either local pools of capital were smaller, opportunities for parental involvement fewer (such as in school-based or youth-centre based projects), social networks weaker or where the musical and participatory form employed (i.e., not a form of musical activity seen by potential local supporters as legitimate or worthy of support) failed to attract parental validation and interest, fewer associated, intermediate outcomes arose. Thus while the Raby Street project in Byker may have benefited from strong, pre-existing social networks between parents and other local community members, the relative paucity of locally held social capital, combined with negative perceptions of the musical form adopted, together with the relatively "closed-off" space of the local youth centre implied little involvement from the local community. Much the same can be said to apply at Galafield, while at Redcar the project's closely school-related nature – which would typically be seen by parents and others as limiting the scope or value of their contributions – meant that there was a lack of opportunity for direct and sustained local community involvement.



In setting limits upon project outcomes, then, or in opening out onto opportunities for their generation, a series of interlinked factors are at work. The nature of a participatory context's "spatial" influences, the ways this goes on to offer scope for particular forms of "provision" and the establishment of specific "processes" (see sections 2.6.1 to 2.6.3) are each thus, in a compound way, influential upon projects' potentialities, in terms of outcomes. At each step in this compound chain, further variables come into play, the relative importance of which is typically a function of a previously compounded factor. Naturally, this situation alerts CM providers to the kinds of obstacles that distinctly composed participatory contexts might typically face.

Due to the quasi-alignment of *musical habitus* with a host of socially influenced factors (geographical, socio-economic, educational, etc.) it is possible to see how participants have often developed a *musical habitus* in line with the musical opportunities and pathways open to them. Where these were initially narrow, even atrophied, participants' *musical habitus* have developed in such a way as to 'make a virtue of necessity' (Bourdieu 1990; 54), finding their positive musical (and music-related) evaluations in the activities and artefacts available to them. This situation might be described as one characterised as "constraining"; prior musical involvement is likely to have been low and musical activities subsequently found attractive, or else the nature of the participatory opportunities provisioned, must cater relatively directly to actors musical dispositions. Where these pathways were more numerous, on the other hand, and the opportunities within them much more readily achievable, actors have been able to develop musical values of a broader and more inclusive nature; confident in their ability and knowledge, and with support and encouragement from the home, young people's musical worlds can here be characterised as "autonomous" – in such instances it will be possible for CM practitioners to involve young people in a greater variety of musical activities.

A key point to understand, one lying beneath these assumptions, is that the *musical habitus* comes to set limits on the way young people approach the matter of CM participation. I am not here insisting that certain participatory contexts are inherently decisive in terms of the effects they have – rather, much is dependent upon young

people's decisions and attitudes towards them. These attitudes, embedded in the Bourdieuan and *musical habitus*, cannot necessarily be amended or altered through the provision of overly "challenging" musical opportunities or ones which seek to impose forms of musical activity from the outside unless these are things which are welcomed by particular *musical habitus*. Rather, such attitudes and dispositions must, and certainly at the outset of CM project establishment, be simply recognised, acknowledged and responded to if they are to reach "least access" young people.

To some, this approach may appear to cater too much to young people, removing challenge from the picture altogether. Is it not the case, the critic may argue, that accommodating young people's musical preferences and pre-existing activities in such a way risks setting up a trade-off against learning, challenge, exposure to new opportunities and perhaps ultimately, against social mobility? In response to this, it must be argued that the case being made does not propose removing learning, challenge and so on, from the picture. Instead, it simply advocates a recognition that, in some cases, and especially those where CM projects actively seek to engage at-risk or "least access" young people, the adoption of an approach which pays inadequate heed to the musical worlds they already inhabit and the attitudes they already hold towards certain music making practices may ultimately serve only to discourage participation. Issues surrounding young people's uptake and continuation of CM participation thus call for an engagement with the relatively constraining and autonomous aspects of their *musical habitus*. As the example of the older Raby Street lads indicates, once these have been incorporated into project functioning, there emerges the opportunity of broadening the scope of what participants will perceive to be appropriate and amenable to them. Rather than necessarily reinforcing narrow taste regimes, the gains in musical confidence and ability made through participation hold out the potential of removing some of the restrictive classifications and evaluations that lead actors to perceive certain activities as 'things...not to do' (Bourdieu 1990: 53). At the same time, attending to the underlying elements of the *musical habitus* offers a way into understanding and, to some extent, predicting the kinds of outcomes that CM activities generate.

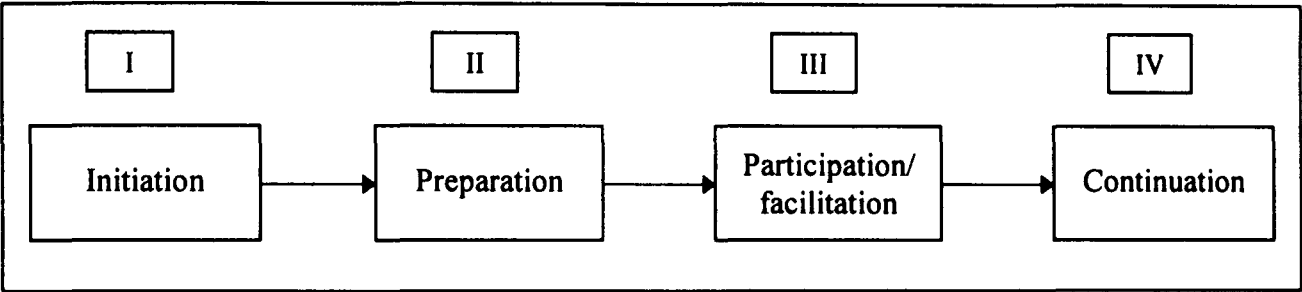


# CHAPTER 6: CONDUCTING THE TUNE

## 6.1 Introduction

Where previous chapters have largely viewed CM activity through the prism of participants’ perspectives, intentions and characteristics, the current chapter brings into focus the key factors at play in the provision of participatory CM activities in the cases of the four projects studied. The approach to be adopted in this task involves examining, in turn, each of the four processes of participatory project development: initiation, preparation, participation/facilitation and, lastly, continuation.

Figure 6.1: Processes of Participatory Project Development (after Wilcox 1994)



To recall from Chapter 2, “initiation” processes relate to the first steps in a project’s life: CM providers’ acquisition of funding, decisions about where and with whom to develop a project and about the CM practitioner(s) who will manage a project and its partnership relations. “Preparation” involves discussions and deliberations between CM providers, project partners and any other parties concerned (e.g. local area arts development teams). As such, a major element of this process is partnership working. The primary aim of preparation is to establish shared aims and objectives, an agreeable system of communication within the partnership, to allocate roles and responsibilities, to determine the available resources and to develop strategies of youth consultation and recruitment. “Participation/facilitation” refers to those processes enacted within the actual in-session, participatory encounter – i.e., during CM sessions and associated activities (performances, gatherings, project collaborations and so on). Here participation methods are employed with the community stakeholders. Participation and facilitation are two sides of the same coin, in a sense; while the former relates to participants’ experiences, the latter concerns the role played by CM practitioners within this fluid, dynamic relationship. The final process, “continuation”, refers to such

activities as reporting back to funders, securing more funding or establishing means through which projects can move towards a state of self-sufficiency or autonomy.

Taking the above series of processes as a guide, the chapter begins with an examination of the conditions surrounding the initiation of the four projects. This discussion seeks to draw out the primary factors motivating CoMusica's selection of Wooler, Raby Street, Galafield and Redcar as contexts for CM activity. Further issues receiving attention here are those relating to the acquisition and use of project funding and the intersection of this with the search for appropriate project partners. Next, I turn to consider the processes involved in project preparation – chiefly a function of project partnerships. Of particular relevance here are the ways in which project partnerships developed communication and commitment, allocated roles and responsibilities, and employed the strategies and resources at their disposal.

The subsequent section concentrates on the approaches to the facilitation of CM participation adopted across projects. Whereas the previous chapter focussed largely on participants' accounts of their participation, here the analysis rests more squarely on community music practitioners' approaches to in-session CM practice. Following a preliminary discussion of some of the skills required and the dilemmas faced in CM facilitation, I go on to discuss the salient aspects of facilitation witnessed across the four case studies before drawing out some of the implications of these for project provision more generally.

The final section draws together the principal strands of the foregrounding discussion and scrutinises them with particular regard to their immediate prospects for continuing and ultimately sustaining their activities. By elucidating the implications of *musical habitus* for project provision, I go on to highlight ways in which the different partnerships might most fruitfully conceive of their project's future potential.

## **6.2 CoMusica Project Initiation**

As was outlined in Chapter 5, the participatory contexts ultimately developed by CM initiatives have wide-ranging effects upon the nature of participation, the make-up of its

participants and the outcomes engendered through this form of creative, community-level activity. Since the matter of CM project initiation involves questions about where to site projects and with whom to establish project partnerships, it must be viewed as having a strong bearing upon CM projects' subsequent functioning. Decisions about the communities or local areas within which to site projects typically implies bringing participatory opportunities into contact with a particular social demographic of young people as well as helping to shape the nature of the CM provision achievable (e.g., as a result of the availability of funding or the pressures facing a project's local partners). Decisions about which partners to establish project partnerships with, meanwhile, affect the character of the spaces within which CM activities might take place, the level and nature of support forthcoming from partners as well as the specific protocols adhered to by partner organisation employees or other stakeholders (e.g., youth workers or school teachers). In essence, these decisions are significant determinants of project characteristics, and as such they dictate, to a large degree, the obstacles projects need to negotiate and the support systems upon which they might rely.

Across the four CoMusica projects selected as case studies, three key factors can be isolated for their significant bearing upon the project initiation decisions taken by CoMusica; firstly, funding eligibility and availability; secondly, the existence of prior working relationships and, thirdly, the "willingness" of partners. In what follows, these three factors are outlined with specific reference to their relative import for each of the cases selected.

### **6.2.1 Funding Eligibility and Availability**

All of CoMusica's CM project practices operate within the parameters laid down by its funding bodies. While there exist a number of sources from which CoMusica can attract funding<sup>68</sup>, its principal funding organisation is Youth Music, having provided CoMusica with three grants totalling £866,500 between 2001 and 2005 (United Kingdom

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<sup>68</sup> These include, for example, the Neighbourhood Renewal Unit, the Social Exclusion Unit, The Children's Fund, Education Action Zones, Creative Partnerships, New Deal for Communities, Youth Inclusion Programme, Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, DCMS, DfES, Connexions and Positive Activities for Young People, Children's Fund, Local Strategic Partnerships, Single Regeneration Budget, Neighbourhood Support Fund, Learning and Skills Council, as well as registered charities of various sorts.

Parliament 2005). Youth Music has a key influence in providing criteria on whose basis CoMusica takes decisions about specific areas' eligibility for CM activity. Youth Music achieves this by prioritising the provision of CM activities seeking to engage 'those previously denied access to creative music making opportunities for reasons of economic, demographic or geographic exclusion' (Youth Music 2002). In line with this, CoMusica's reports to Youth Music provide information about the areas within which their CM projects are based, often citing multiple indices of deprivation ratings or exclusion-related geographic factors as a means of demonstrating the ways funding is being directed towards priority areas. Given that half of the wards in the North East were amongst the most deprived 20% in the country (DETR 2000), when CoMusica established the majority of its CM projects in 2001, many areas of the region fell easily within Youth Music's priority remit. Indeed, due to the extent of this deprivation, the CoMusica programme has been granted the status of one of 22 recognised national Youth Music Action Zones.

In addition to Youth Music's funding stipulations, the availability of other grants and local authority service agreements also affect decisions about where to locate CoMusica projects. When the second round of Youth Music funding became available in 2003 for example, regularly funded organisations, such as CoMusica, were actively encouraged to seek match funding or partner funders for their work. Having already developed a partnership approach to its roster of CM projects, in its second phase, CoMusica increasingly sought to work more within areas where partner working could attract further, locally-held funds. Thus for instance, in the case of the CoMusica Phase II<sup>69</sup> project based at Redcar Community College, one influential factor in the project initiation deliberations was the fact that supplementary funding from Redcar and Cleveland SRB (Single Regeneration Budget) Unit was available to further support the project. Redcar's CoMusica CM practitioner Sue explains:

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<sup>69</sup> During fieldwork, CoMusica was in phase II. The "phases" of CoMusica's work correspond to Youth Music's allocated periods of funding. Thus Phase I ran from 2001 to 2003, with Phase II running from 2003 to 2005. At the time of writing CoMusica is in its third phase.

I did my usual run around trying to find who had money and lo-and-behold there was a large pot of money in Redcar through the SRB fund.  
(Sue, CM practitioner, Redcar)

As well as bearing considerable influence upon the choice of Redcar as an area within which to establish a CoMusica project, the availability of supplementary funding also played a key role in the decisions to base projects at the Raby Street and Galafield Youth Centres. In these instances, the level of partnership funding made available by Newcastle City Council meant that the Newcastle City Arts Team had a significant influence in determining those parts of Newcastle within which CoMusica would carry out its work.

Thus in the case of three of the four case studies, either local authority service agreements or area-specific European funding supplemented Youth Music's criteria in influencing decisions about where projects would be established. Of the four case studies selected, the one over whose establishment CoMusica exercised most independence in its decisions (about where to locate and with which local partners to work) was the project in Wooler. As has been discussed in previous chapters, in the case of this project, the outcomes generated for and by participants were much more far-reaching than in the case of the other three projects. Leaving issues related to project partnerships aside for the moment (these shall be attended to in due course), it might thus be noted that where CoMusica exercised a relatively free rein in project initiation decisions, the ensuing project went on to become highly successful in its own terms. Unlike the settings of the other three projects, each of which were marked by high levels of economic deprivation (the suburbs of post-industrial Redcar, the inner-city estate of Byker Wall and multiply disadvantaged Newbiggin), Wooler fulfilled Youth Music's funding criteria by virtue of its relative geographical exclusion. It is worth relating this discussion back to that concerned with "locally held pools of social capital" (section 5.5) as they relate to local partners, project participants and members of local communities more broadly. That is, in recognition of the specific challenges characterising the projects working within economically deprived neighbourhoods, implicated in decisions about project initiation are a host of further matters that might, to some extent, be anticipated in advance. As we saw, these matters connected with a

range of variables as they impacted upon projects and their outcomes, from the prevailing levels of prior musical experience characteristic of local youth, through to the extent and type of local support from which projects benefited. Considerations relating to project initiation might thus, when an appreciation of the albeit broad attributes of *musical habitus* and participatory context are introduced, already alert CM providers to issues whose resolution might prove especially valuable to projects in the long term.

### **6.2.2 Prior Relationships**

Effective partnerships proved themselves a crucial component of CM project success. Establishing an effective CM project partnership is about partners developing, amongst other things, a sound working relationship characterised by clear communication and shared understandings. That said, in the case of CM projects, it is important to take account of the fact that CM activities are typically offered to local partner organisations who, while welcoming this provision, are not necessarily bound by statutory obligations to provide CM projects with particular forms of assistance. Given such potentially loose ties between partners, the presence of prior relationships, between CM practitioners and the individuals employed by project partners assumed some significance in CoMusica's initiation decisions. The reason why prior relationships can mitigate against risks to project failure is their basis in trust. As Warren has noted of associational life within civil society, 'Trust built on reciprocity...can develop into robust cooperative relationships' and it 'enables individuals to overcome problems of collective action' (Warren 2001: 74). It thus ought to come as no surprise to find that one factor emerging as prominent in project initiation decisions was the presence of prior working relationships (and the trust embedded in them) between CoMusica staff and their chosen partner organisations. In fact, CoMusica developed two of the CM projects selected as cases studies directly out of prior working relationships between its staff and project partners.

CM work had been ongoing at both Raby Street and Galafield prior to the formal establishment of CoMusica in February 2001. In both instances, this CM practice had taken the form of a project known as "Voicetek". That project sought to provide music making opportunities to local young women and girls through blending vocal work with

the use of music making technology (computer software manipulated by CM workers). Prior to the establishment of CoMusica, this work was facilitated by Newcastle-based Arts Company, “Original Zing”. When Original Zing wound up its operations in late 2000, and members of its senior management and CM practitioner team became deeply involved in the organisation and delivery of CoMusica, these individuals’ pre-established links with the Raby Street and Galafield staff were maintained and carried over into the new CoMusica programme of work. Indeed, the Voicetek project maintained its form throughout this period and continued to operate at both centres in an almost seamless way.

In addition, since CoMusica’s work within Newcastle continued to benefit from the supplementary funding that Newcastle City Council had made available to Original Zing, CoMusica also maintained, in line with this relationship’s service agreement<sup>70</sup>, its links with Newcastle City Council’s Arts Team.

That was the benefit of having the [Newcastle] City Council involved really, because of those ongoing relationships and the networks of people delivering the work.

(Emma, CoMusica Project Leader – formerly of Original Zing)

For Newcastle City Council’s Arts Team, Galafield in the Outer West of the city and Byker in the East End were seen as particularly appropriate centres within which to develop CM projects by virtue of both their locations, the experience of their staff teams and the facilities they could offer. Indeed, the Galafield centre, with its designated arts “shop” space, its in-house p.a. system and community broadcast radio station had been specifically designed and built with a view to providing high levels of opportunity for young people’s creative activity. The Raby Street centre, meanwhile, had been developing music making facilities and activities for a number of years. Naturally, given the increased levels of funding available to CoMusica (in comparison with that of Original Zing), new strands of CM activity could also be developed within either centre. In recognition of the enthusiasm for music demonstrated by Raby Street’s young male

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<sup>70</sup> Such “service agreements” effectively serve to orient working relationships between funding organisations and CM provider organisations else between partner organisations and CM provider organisations, providing indication of the nature and levels of responsibility of either party to one another over the course of projects’ lifetimes.

attendants, a new DJing tuition course was built into the project while male-oriented participatory opportunities also began to develop at Galafield.

In theory, basing CM project partnerships in prior working relationships in this way can bring several practical advantages to a community music provider organisation. Firstly, the project partnership has already had an opportunity to understand its members' protocols and priorities; secondly, the pre-requisites of any partnership relationship (i.e., the jointly agreed provision of a suitable setting and appropriate resources) have been clarified in advance. Furthermore, routines surrounding CM provision would, in theory, already have been established, thereby providing CoMusica management with a good idea of the nature and levels of partner support they could expect to rely upon. In addition, CoMusica's community music practitioners had developed prior relationships with each centre's Youth Service-employed staff.

Unfortunately, however, in the case of the two projects where prior working relationships were in existence (Raby Street and Galafield), they were not formalised or clear; neither CoMusica nor the Newcastle City Arts Team had any kind of formal agreement with the Youth Service. The practical implications of this situation were that any agreements brokered between either CoMusica or the Newcastle City Arts Team and the youth managers/workers at Raby Street or Galafield remained informal in nature and were not, therefore, necessarily seen by youth managers'/workers' line managers as being of particular relevance to their aims and objectives. This lack of formality had several implications for project partnerships, many of which shall be explored in greater depth in what follows. For now, the effect of prior working relationships between CM workers and Youth Service employees and the inter-personal trust with which they were imbued can be noted for its perceived value in decisions relating to project initiation:

We'd worked with Pam [key youth worker contact at Galafield] for years before that, and that's a key, a massive key factor because we don't have a kind of contractual, written-down partnership with the Youth Service, our relationships are based on individual workers.

(Emma, CoMusica Project Leader)



The tendency to base projects around prior relationships was also evident at Redcar Community College. Here, one of the project's key CM workers, Sue, had been developing arts work within the school as part of her role with Creative Partnerships<sup>71</sup>. Through this involvement Sue became familiar with those members of school staff most involved in developing arts activities and also became aware that:

They [the school] had just been turned down from Performing [Specialist] Arts status, and mainly on the strength of music. The music had been, well, was disastrous in the school.

(Sue, CM practitioner, Redcar)

Still keen to attain Specialist Status and to encourage more in-school musical activity as a means of achieving this, senior staff at Redcar Community College thus responded positively to CoMusica's offer of CM provision. Although for somewhat different reasons than the Galafield and Raby Street projects then, the presence of prior working relationships between project partners and CoMusica staff was nevertheless important in the decision to develop this partnership within the Tees Valley area.

The sometimes informal relationships between CM providers and their local partners alerts us to the fact that much of what goes on within project partnerships conforms less to strict protocols or policies than the nature of the individual personalities involved. Given the looseness and changeability of some of the structures affecting CM projects, their activity can perhaps best be described as being very much about working *with* people; the degree of trust and mutual respect embedded in the relationship between one lead CM practitioner and one key host partner representative may, in finely balanced situations, prove crucial in determining broader project success. Indeed, the significant role of one-to-one relationships between key partners and the extent to which successful CM work is premised upon fruitful working relationships turns our attention to a further component of this picture – the relative “willingness” of project partners.

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<sup>71</sup> Creative Partnerships is a government-funded programme (through DfES and DCMS), which aims to establish collaborative partnerships between schools and creative artists, with the expressed purpose of “animating” (i.e., introducing elements of creative and/or arts activity into) the national curriculum. Begun in 2003, the programme was initially launched in 16 Creative Partnership areas (Tees Valley being one such area).

### 6.2.3 “Willing” Partners

A third key factor providing beneficial conditions for CM project initiation might be termed the “willingness” of partners. A “willing” approach can manifest itself in a number of ways. Where there existed no formal recognition of the partnership between CoMusica and Youth Service employees (Galafield and Raby Street) the willingness of individual youth workers to go beyond their job descriptions in supporting project activities assumed key importance. At Redcar too, in addition to the availability of supplemental funding and Sue’s prior relationship with the school, the zeal with which key school staff (Head and Deputy Head) responded to the offer of developing a CM project within the school setting was of some significance.

Given the variety of forms it took across cases, such willingness can perhaps be most usefully thought of as existing along a continuum. One end of this continuum is characterised by a relative passivity, a *mere* willingness to provide space and commit support staff to providing minimal levels of assistance to a CM project. At the other end of this continuum, project partners are far more active in creating the right conditions for projects (e.g., by contributing to project planning and strategy development) as well as supporting CM practitioners’ ongoing work in more concrete ways. Of the four projects selected as case studies, the active and enthusiastic end of this willingness continuum is best characterised by the project partner in Wooler.

Fundamental to Wooler’s selection as the location for a CoMusica CM project was the enthusiastic approach made by Glendale Middle School’s music teacher to the directors of the Learning and Participation Department at The Sage Gateshead.

She [Music Teacher at Glendale Middle School] was at events that they [The Sage Gateshead] were running, she knew the directors of the Learning and Participation Department because she plays in a ceilidh band. She’s very into music and she would go to all of the concerts so she’ll network with all the people and will be the sort of person to say “Yes please, we’d like some of that and I’ll support you”...they [the directors] would have been foolish not to have taken on that enthusiasm  
(Helen, Project Leader, SteelQuake)

The input of this teacher was to prove key over the project's early months and years; she accompanied lead CM worker Helen to a number of social engagements in and around the Wooler area, providing what the latter described as "a big foot in the door" with key contacts such as local teachers, headmasters and workers from other organisations (many of whom were to subsequently offer the project performance opportunities). Furthermore, once the project strategy and form had been determined, the same teacher was active in the recruitment of participants through the school, assisting with transport and helping facilitate a partial renovation of the disused tractor barn that was to subsequently become the project's home. Nor did her assistance end there; she also helped organised the loan of a small set of steel pans from a local primary school while the project awaited the arrival of a set of new steel pans.

The willingness of this project partner comes in stark contrast to that of a previous Northumberland-based partner; prior to the establishment of the Wooler project, one established at Druridge Bay had ended "purely because she [the Project Leader] had absolutely no support from [project] partners" (Helen, Project Leader, SteelQuake). Similarly, a project based in the deprived Scotswood area of Newcastle also failed primarily due to a lack of ongoing partner support. Willingness might thus be thought of as something more than a merely accepting stance towards CM activity; it involves partners taking steps to ensure that projects and their CM practitioners are supported from the outset. As shall be explored further below, where the willingness of partners is supplemented by that of other stakeholders, as it was in Wooler, the combined effect can be of considerable import for a CM project.

As table 6.2 (below) indicates, some projects' initiation resulted from a confluence of local funding eligibility/availability and the presence of prior working relationships. In these instances (Galafield, Raby Street and Redcar), CoMusica project leaders valued these factors for their perceived<sup>72</sup> efficacy in offsetting the difficulties of developing CM activities within deprived communities. This approach is highly pragmatic; by building extra resources into the framework of projects, basic threats to the delivery of

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<sup>72</sup> As we shall go on to explore, the perceived efficacy of such relationships and their actual value in facilitating CM project delivery do not always tally.

CM activity (lack of partner support and material resources) can be overcome. That said, projects undertaken in partnership with organisations which are already under considerable strain (often a consequence of interlinked social problems and stretched resources within deprived communities), can bring with them problems of their own (of which more below).

Table 6.2: Case Study Initiation Conditions

	Raby Street	Galafield	Wooler	Redcar
Was supplementary funding available to project?	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
Did the partnership develop out of a prior relationship with CoMusica employees?	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
Did CoMusica seek, yet not achieve formal agreements with support workers?	Yes	Yes	No	No
Was CoMusica given a free rein in choosing partners?	No	No	Yes	Yes
Did partners instigate contact with CoMusica?	No	No	Yes	No

At Wooler, project initiation followed a different route. In this instance, notwithstanding its obligation to establish at least one youth-oriented project in rural Northumberland, CoMusica was free to select a setting and a project partner with little regard for such matters as supplemental funding availability or prior working relationships. The approach consequently adopted by CoMusica was to give primacy, in its decision making, to the levels of partner support and enthusiasm (i.e., active willingness). This project subsequently went on to fare considerably better than the other three projects in terms of attracting, sustaining and extending the participation of young people.

Finally, it might be noted that while CoMusica's approach of working with 'willing rather than reluctant partners' (Holden & Jones 2005) may enable CoMusica to expand

the scope of its activity, it also implies that less CM work might be channelled towards the most needy or socially excluded communities since, within such contexts, potential project partners' ability to be appear willing is diminished by the range of other problems they face.

### **6.3 Community Music Project Partnerships**

As is implied by the above discussion, CoMusica's adopted approach to CM project provision seeks to place partnerships at their very heart. In terms of their make-up, CM project partnerships consist of a number of actors, each with differing levels of direct input into project operations. Each partnership involves a CoMusica project leader and one or more CoMusica CM practitioners who carry out CM activity facilitation "on-the-ground" (these two roles are often carried out by the same individual such as in Wooler with Helen or at Galafield with Emma). Following this, each partnership consists of a lead partner (often a school, youth centre or arts organisation), which may also provide one or more employees as project support workers. In addition to what might be considered this core team of partnership members, a CoMusica CM project partnership might also involve varying degrees of input from third parties such as local authority music services, LADAs (local area development agencies), project-associated arts organisations or local council arts teams. This latter set of actors, typically acting in a consultative or advisory capacity, tended to have less ongoing input into projects than either CoMusica or lead partners and their employees; it is for this reason that my focus here rests principally upon the core partnership members.

Together, project partnerships organise participatory music making activities for young people within specific milieus. In delegating the tasks necessary to achieve this there are no hard and fast rules; different projects undertaken within different settings throw up different needs, each of which may be responded to in different ways. That said, the general trend was for CoMusica CM workers to take the lead on issues related directly to CM activity facilitation (recruitment of young people, delivering appropriate music making or music-related opportunity) while CoMusica project leaders and lead partners jointly managed the spaces and numerous other material resources upon which projects depended. Nevertheless, as is noted in section 6.2.2, the basis upon which local partners

entered into partnership with CoMusica was volitional – as much as CoMusica may have stipulated some basic prerequisites for project partners to fulfil, these were typically set at minimal levels. This situation means that much of the value that might be added to projects by their local partners calls for the latter to go beyond their basic job description somewhat, in placing trust in the partnership.

For those such as Putnam (2000), trust between actors facilitates coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit – as such it is closely related to social capital. Tonkiss (2004) looks further into social capital and trust, going on to describe the latter as a feeling that operates on an informal level, affecting social action and interaction, that allows actors to live with and tolerate uncertainty. Conceiving of trust as tied to informally constructed arrangements in this way makes it directly relevant to the relationships characterising CM project partnerships, since these often relied, in their functioning, upon minimally formalised relationships. As far as the partnership literature is concerned, the consensus is that, although it is possible to work jointly with little trust between partners, the most successful partnerships have (and, through hard work, maintain) a strong level of mutual trust (Wildridge et al. 2004). Ensuring smaller partners are seen as bringing equal value to the collaboration, through resources such as knowledge and local legitimacy is also seen as helpful (Hudson & Hardy 2002). In a recently published work focussing upon the realities of community engagement in England, Truscott and Maguire (2006) found that the creation of effective relationships between community representatives and service providers, of the kind characterised by trust, enabled the identification of gaps in provision and the creation of solutions based on thinking along the order of “how can we?” rather than “why don’t you?” A further aspect of trust might thus be seen as relating to the honesty that trusting relationships encourage.

Effectively, trust can thus be thought of as developing out of the extent to which partners shared accountability, responsibility, risks, rewards as well as common aims and objectives. In this both informal interpersonal links together with transparency across formal arrangements are significant. To explore the ways in which project partnerships’ development of effective relationships, characterised by trust, variously

impacted upon the four case studies selected, in what follows I shall isolate and explore the key themes emerging across projects. The rationale adopted in this places themes into three pairs: communication and commitment, roles and responsibilities and, finally, strategy and resources.

### **6.3.1 Communication & Commitment**

Clear, frequent and open communication is one of the pillars upon which successful project partnerships are built (Wilcox 1994; Ward 2005). As with trust, informal relationships and communication links can be particularly valuable in cultivating good communication. Effective project preparation processes both rely upon and at the same time provide further opportunities for good communicative practices to develop between partners. Almost all aspects of project partnership working call for good quality communication between partners, and as such, this can be considered a fundamental and primary condition of successful CM project development. At the same time, the achievement of good communicative practice depends on the prior commitment of both partners to any project. Project commitment can be said to consist primarily of the allocation of adequate time and energy to the development of the partnership. Without partner commitment to the endeavour of a CM project, the effective communication upon which so much else depends will fail to materialise, the trust developed between partners will, in all probability, remain limited, resulting in unstable project partnerships ill-equipped to negotiate the potential pitfalls lying ahead.

A good example of how a strong commitment accompanied by clear and consistent communication can contribute to a project's success is the SteelQuake project. This project partnership developed out of initially informal relationships between a teacher at Glendale Middle School and members of The Sage Gateshead's Department of Learning and Participation. Subsequent to this, the flow of dialogue was assiduously taken up by CM practitioner Helen and the music teacher of Glendale Middle School, remaining both steady and transparent to both partners. One way in which the partnership's communicative practices proved effective was by ensuring that, at the planning and preparation stages, the key conversations taking place were those between individuals sufficiently empowered to make decisions about their input into the project

and to do so in full recognition of their capabilities. This meant that whenever discussions were held, each party was largely aware of the resources at its disposal and the challenges facing the partnership – a situation that led to teamwork and the adoption of pragmatic and realisable strategies.

Of further significance to both the level of commitment demonstrated by the project partners and the quality of communication subsequently engendered is the fact that each core partner shared the view that the project's primary aim was the simple provision and prioritisation of music making opportunities; few other agendas were allowed to obscure this overriding musical focus. As a result, assessments of the project's progress were equally relevant to both partners and any obstacles to progress were quickly and mutually recognised as such. Undoubtedly, this mutuality of understandings and expectations led to both an instinctive commitment to the whole process of project development; project initiation was accompanied by a period of sustained communication, while subsequent face-to-face or telephone communications were regular, sustained and their outcomes documented as a matter of good practice.

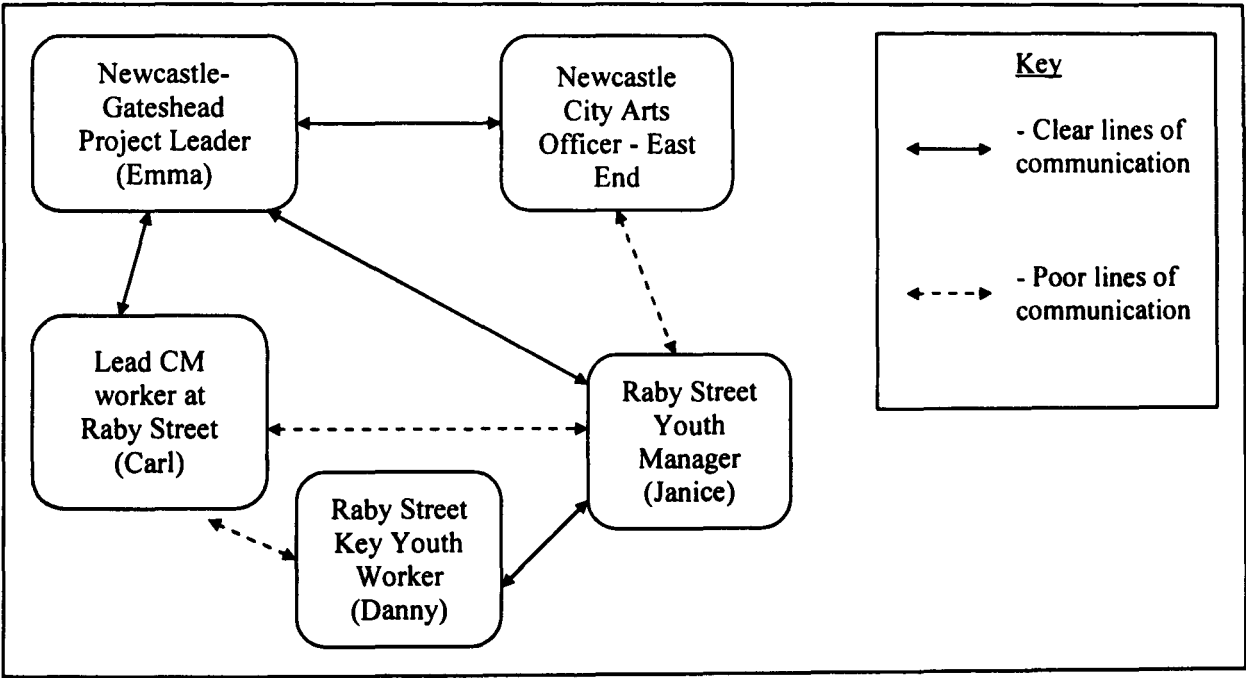
In contrast to the streamlined and relatively simple two-way partnership communication evident at Wooler, the Raby Street project, whose partnership strictly involved five distinct actors in its organisation and delivery (in a configuration outlined in Figure 6.3, below), struggled to maintain clear and open flows of communication between parties. Two key factors contributed to difficulties in achieving clear communication between the key members of the Raby Street project partnership. Of these, the relative lack of commitment from Youth Service employees to the development of a robust project partnership was undoubtedly primary. This arose in large part due to the absence of any formal agreements between the Youth Services and the other partnership members. In essence, by overlooking the need to formalise their working relationship with CoMusica and the Newcastle City Arts Team in their policies, the Youth Services gave relatively low priority to the development of CM projects within their centres. As a consequence, CoMusica project leaders and practitioners were obliged to hope that youth managers and youth workers could find the time in their rosters of work to contribute to the development of CM projects:



Until you get that formal agreement, you're relying on key people who are committed, so if Janice [youth manager at Raby Street] moves or...wasn't very committed, then you're left in a tricky position.  
(Emma, CoMusica Newcastle-Gateshead Project Leader)

In spite of the best efforts of Youth Manager Janice and the Raby Street staff to contribute as much to this project as possible, they remained unable to free up adequate time for the appropriate development of the project partnership. One upshot of this situation was that the system of communication between members of the project partnership remained reliant upon numerous one-to-one conversations, rather than a shared discussion involving all key partner workers.

Figure 6.3: Flow of Communication within Raby Street Project Partnership



Indeed, during the four-month period of fieldwork, the five principal actors involved were unable to meet together.

In terms of what we expect or ask of people is that they are part of a project steering group...so my experience of the workers there [at Raby Street], when I get contact with them or speak to them is very strong, it's easy to work with them, but they don't necessarily always manage to get to external meetings.  
(Emma, CoMusica Newcastle-Gateshead Project Leader)

This situation implied that alternative and reliable communicative practices would need to be established by other means, especially so between those actors holding decision making powers over project activities: in this case the CoMusica Newcastle-Gateshead Project Leader, Emma, and the Raby Street Youth Manager, Janice. In this however, and despite Janice's three-year tenure of her role, there appeared to be discrepancies; neither were Janice and Emma able to meet regularly, nor had they managed to solidify another consistent and reliable set of communicative processes. The pressures upon staff time and commitment implied that the project partnership lacked a firm sense of direction:

They've never, see I've never had any of that [aims and objectives] at all from the Sage [CoMusica]...I've never really sat down and gone through that, it's always been "Right you can have a tutor on this night for this length of time", "Fine, no problem".

(Janice, Youth Manager, Raby Street)

Furthermore, given the need for this project to appeal successfully to the specific interests and needs of the young people at Raby Street (and for responsive provision-related decisions to be made in consultation with young people), the absence of both Emma and Janice from on-the-ground, in-session situations was decisive. It meant that the onus of communication subsequently fell upon the two on-the-ground partner workers (i.e., the CoMusica DJ tutor, Carl, and the key youth worker contact, Danny). Unfortunately, however, there was little by way of an agreed protocol between Carl and Danny. The knock-on effect of such communicative problems impacted directly upon the project's ability to sustain the interest of the centre's young people:

Odd times when they [CM tutors] did turn up the young people hadn't turned up because for the last two weeks they [CM tutors] hadn't turned up do you know what I mean, it was like, it was silliness really.

(Danny, Youth Worker, Raby Street)

With little by way of project record keeping, blurred and often closed lines of communication and no formalisation of working relations and protocols between Youth Service employees and CoMusica, the project partnership appeared to be making little

headway, thereby limiting the chances of the partnership developing any trust, reciprocity or mutuality of objectives.

In light of the shortfalls in commitment and communication evident at Raby Street, the appointment of a new key youth worker, Dave, on the other side of Newcastle at the Galafield Centre might have been expected to stall this project's progress, certainly at least temporarily. However several factors meant that the levels of commitment and communication were greater at Galafield than was the case at Raby Street. For one thing, Galafield's youth manager took a far less central role within the project partnership, instead devolving responsibility for project partnership relations and project decision making to youth worker Dave. As an enthusiastic amateur musician, Dave consistently strove to commit much of his available time and energy to the partnership. Further, this project's lead CM practitioner was the "Newcastle-Gateshead Project" Leader, Emma. Thus with key decision makers also acting as on-the-ground workers, communication could, in principle, be far more effectively handled at Galafield than was the case at Raby Street. Indeed, in respect of their ease of regular communication, the lack of formality inherent in this partner relationship was, unlike at Raby Street, seen by youth worker Dave as a plus:

Basically it's a standing arrangement with a bit of flexibility to accommodate changes in circumstances, and I think that flexibility works well for CoMusica, for ourselves and for the young people.

(Dave, Youth Worker, Galafield)

In the case of the project based at Redcar Community College, lead CM worker Sue's close relationship with the school through her role as representative of Creative Partnerships meant that communication with the key partner worker, the school's Deputy Head Teacher and Creative Art Programme Director, took place on a weekly basis. Nevertheless, while the school's commitment to the CoMusica project was strong on rhetoric, it was also (certainly in its earliest phases) somewhat less sustained in practice. One reason for this is that at the time CoMusica entered into partnership with Redcar Community College, the school was undertaking an active recruitment of a number of arts activities into the school. The zeal characterising the school's urgency to incorporate creative activities into its fabric issued from the dual interests of attaining

**Specialist Arts Status (thereby providing alternative learning opportunities to pupils) and subsequently seeing improvements in exam results:**

When we looked at the exam results, the performances our children make in subjects which are allied to practical activities...is very high. Whereas we were struggling, three years ago, to meet national standards for our exam results of A to C, since we decided to push for this [Specialist Arts Status], the kind of work that we do in school now has changed our exam performance from 28% or so three year ago, for instance, to around about 45% now.

(Creative Art Programme Director, Redcar)

In line with the schools' espoused commitment, CoMusica's work with Redcar began very soon after the initial partnership had been established. As CM practitioner Sue relates:

They were definitely really, really keen for us to do stuff and whatever we wanted to do...they'd just find us space all the time...they said "Use anything you like in the school, just find a space and have it"...they've got a huge amount of stuff that is happening through the Creative Partnerships projects.

(Sue, CM Practitioner, Redcar)

This situation did, however, have several negative implications for this project. Firstly, while the school was able to provide space and basic facilities, an early difficulty encountered by the project partnership was the shortage of time school staff could dedicate to the development of aims and objectives, shared strategies, access to material resources and other such partnership functions:

I was put into this role as the Creative Partnerships link person [and, as such core CoMusica project partner] a year ago...honestly, at the time I thought it just meant going to meetings...I was wrong, it's much more active than that, much more hands on...to run extra curricular facility for the children to access requires extra curricular staffing and you can only do so much within your week

(Creative Art Programme Director, Redcar)

The project partner's lack of time meant that little genuine mutuality developed within the partnership. This effectively left the CoMusica CM tutors to carry out their practice

within the school setting, yet in relative isolation from most aspects of school life and, therefore, the majority of its pupils. The situation at Redcar School thus bears comparison to that at Raby Street; in each case the absence of a full and formal recognition, by lead partners, of the commitment needed to develop project partnerships appeared to limit both projects' progress. In order to further explore the knock-on effects of low commitment and limited communication, let us now turn to the matter of roles and responsibilities.

### **6.3.2 Roles and Responsibilities**

As with good-quality, regular communication, the clarity surrounding roles and responsibilities can be seen as a basic element of successful partnership working. Effective partnerships between voluntary or third sector organisations and local community groups have been characterised as those where, amongst other things, the terms and conditions of roles within the partnership are negotiated and clearly understood (NIACE 2000). There are a number of ways in which the approach adopted by project partners vis-à-vis roles and responsibilities might impact upon the participatory contexts ultimately developed. Where advice or support is not forthcoming from local partners, CM project workers must make best guesses about a variety of issues in the time granted them (e.g., about the musical interests and activities of potential participants) and go about sourcing materials without the aid of local knowledge. Where partners lack a shared vision of their roles and goals, divergences may emerge in participatory situations through CM practitioners meeting resistance or running up against partner agendas in their working practices. As shall be explored below, the clarity of roles and responsibilities within the project partnership can have effects for not only the ways partnerships function but also at the level of in-session CM facilitation. Clearly then, issues surrounding roles and responsibilities can be directly influential upon participation and the ways participants respond to their involvement.

Unsurprisingly, where communication between partners was inconsistent or ambiguous, partnerships also encountered misunderstandings surrounding roles and responsibilities. As has been detailed already, the Raby Street project suffered from a lack of consistent, clear communication between its key actors. This implied a good deal of confusion

surrounding both what the Raby Street staff could expect to depend upon from CoMusica and vice-versa:

The way things are going it's like, I need to know the programme, I need to know what they're [CoMusica] coming in to do.

(Janice, Youth Manager, Raby Street)

An illustration of the way roles and responsibilities were not fully understood within the Raby Street partnership was provided during the planning stages of the "Fusion" young people's music event. Following a quiet summer period for the project at Raby Street (during which time both the lads' and the CM practitioners' presence at the centre was somewhat erratic) the group of lads involved in the Duke of Edinburgh award scheme suggested, to youth workers, planning and organising a youth music event to count as part of their service towards an award. In this, the centre's staff saw their relationship with CoMusica as of great potential value (primarily since the youth workers had little experience of planning specifically *musical* events), and subsequently sought to involve the CoMusica staff in the event organisation process. This attempt to reinvigorate the partnership served only, however, to reveal the project partners' lack of understanding about each other's roles, responsibilities and aims. Youth manager Janice relates:

I mean, I was hoping that they [CoMusica] would have had more of an input for the event, cos that is the side that I don't know much about, and then through [the subsequent] evaluation, apparently [it emerged that] there is staff in CoMusica who organise events and could have come out ...you know what I mean? ...so, that was frustrating.

(Janice, Youth Manager, Raby Street)

In essence, securing the CM practitioners' input into the event planning activities implied renegotiating the use of their time at the centre. Given the nature of the communicative structure already outlined, in the end, little support in the event's planning materialised. This incident is, in fact, characteristic of the sort of confusions and misinterpretations brought to the partnership by both the Raby Street staff and, on occasion, the CoMusica staff. That is to say, while the former tended to see the latter's role as seeking to compliment to their "youth-service" focus (insofar as the CM practitioners were assumed to be singing from the same hymn sheet as youth workers,

so to speak, by seeking to encouraging participation and learning through not only musical, but also music-*related* activities), as far as the CM workers were concerned, their time and energies could be best used in the exclusive encouragement of music making and musical skills development.

As has been mentioned already, such misalignment of project aims and objectives can be attributed, certainly in part, to the lack of communication evident in the steering of the project; largely an outcome of the informal arrangement between the Youth Service and both CoMusica and Newcastle City Arts Team. In fact, this lack of formality had repercussions for all of the CoMusica projects partnered with the Youth Services. Effectively, the only protocols to which youth workers could refer were those laid out by their contracts of employment and Youth Service policy priorities. Yet in these circumstances:

If the Youth Services' next strategies say that this is not a priority or this is not an important thing, then it's hard for people [Youth Service employees] to make the time for that within their work.

(Emma, CoMusica Newcastle-Gateshead Project Leader)

The aims of the CM activity taking place within youth centres could thus come to be sidetracked, either wittingly or unwittingly, by youth workers' specific objectives or by Youth Service policy priorities. Naturally, however much CoMusica project leaders attempted to work flexibly around youth workers' priorities, they nevertheless rued the absence of any guaranteed project commitment from them. Problems consequently arose at several CoMusica youth centre-based projects where partner worker input was either heavy-handed, forthcoming yet unguided, or else simply absent. Where worker input was excessive and/or inappropriate, this typically led not only to problems in the planning and organisation of projects but also within sessions. This was the case at the Galafield project, where new youth worker Dave began, upon entering his role, to reorient the centre's musical activities and to play an increasingly influential role within CM sessions.

In this case, whenever participants of the girls group raised issues unrelated to the musical focus of sessions, youth worker Dave often saw it as his duty to intervene and respond. One might argue that this is exactly the kind of partner support that could be of particular value in situations where young people's behaviour is liable to become disruptive. Unfortunately however, on several occasions Dave's input was more significant in sidetracking the group than was that of any participant. The result was that sessions could easily turn into forums for the discussion and resolution of any number of matters, none of which were necessarily relevant to CM sessions' focus as the lead CM practitioner saw it. Over time, Dave also saw it as his place to seek to correct for any perceived problems within the group. After three of the girls expressed unhappiness about what they perceived as favouritism on the part of the lead CM tutor, Dave encouraged them to bring the issue to Emma's attention during a session. This directly challenged the way the group's participatory practice had developed up until that point in time.

The group were encouraged by the youth worker [Dave] to talk about those issues and I was concerned about the effects of that...and how that was managed...there's things that kind of come up...priorities of when you're working with different organisations and what their priorities are and what they're based on... which are not always exactly the same as ours or we wouldn't necessarily go about it the same way.

(Emma, Project Leader, Galafield)

Being so intimately involved in such a small group, working on a week-by-week basis (there were only four participants on average), Dave's role in sessions had thus become far more involved than was normally the case for support workers. This is inevitable in the absence of shared thinking about regular in-session CM working practices. Thus while Emma focussed on the group's musical activity, Dave continued to view the projects through the lens of youth work. This clashing of agendas is clear from the way they each described the project; Emma seeing the sessions very much as up to the CM practitioners to direct, while Dave saw them more as a shared endeavour (albeit with little communication of overarching goals):



Previously, I think we had our workers running *our sessions* without the youth workers involved so much...

(Emma, Project Leader, Galafield – my emphasis)

*As workers we* probably feel under pressure to provide them [the young people] with a few more highs just to sort of maintain their interest levels...

(Dave, Youth Worker, Galafield – my emphasis)

The point here is not that Dave's input was not potentially valuable or, at times, welcome. Rather, it is that the lack of clearly demarcated boundaries and roles between the partners served to accentuate conflicts in working practices and expectations rather than allaying them.

The lack of protocols surrounding youth workers' roles and responsibilities within project partnerships are perhaps most clearly discernable when viewed in contrast to the successfully demarcated roles of partners at the Wooler and Redcar projects. At both of these projects, local partners largely left the management of in-session activity to the professionals, instead seeing their support of project activities as most usefully directed towards the provision of adequate space, opportunities for participant recruitment and the securing of resources. Indeed, numerous aspects of the Wooler project partnership indicate a clear, shared understanding, between partners, of aims and objectives as well as roles and responsibilities. In the absence of youth workers and the relative disassociation of the project from distinctly educational, in-school activities, difficulties in integrating or negotiating educational/youth developmental and CM agendas were entirely bypassed at Wooler. Given the fact that the SteelQuake pan yard is effectively a dedicated space, there was little to distract participants from music learning and playing during CM sessions. This allowed Helen to place strictly musical concerns at the projects core and concentrate on developing the musical skills of participants:

The whole message that I try and get across, which is why the project is successful, is that it's all about the music, everything else is secondary.

(Helen, Project Leader, SteelQuake)

Leaving Helen to focus upon matters musical, the local partner adopted the role of support worker by brokering potentially valuable relationships between Helen and other

local service providers, school staff and participants' parents, before going on to encourage the development of a youth-parent project committee. This was to subsequently unburden Helen of many of the non-music related pressures and obligations facing the partnership; committee members took on the roles of administrator, transport organiser, treasurer, booking agent, chair, and so on, delegating tasks equitably between themselves. With the project adopting a traditional "band" format, familiar to all project stakeholders, those roles and tasks key to the development of the project fell largely into place with key actors' assumptions and prior experiences. Both the lead CM tutor and the project partners also shared clear understandings of the direction and aims of the project, so associated roles and responsibilities developed organically and were fulfilled with the minimum of fuss.

At Redcar, meanwhile, the role adopted by the project's lead partner contact, was, as has already been noted, a little too distant. The situation arose less as a result of choice than due to the increasing flow of arts initiatives into the school. That the position of Creative Art Programme Director was only created at the school after approximately a year of CoMusica activity means that beforehand, the school's role in the partnership was a relatively passive one. As we shall explore below, this had more implications for project strategy planning and resource acquisition than necessarily with issues surrounding roles and relationships.

### **6.3.3 Resources & Strategy**

Naturally, material and human resources play a substantial role in the successful development of participatory music making opportunities. Undoubtedly of equal if not greater importance, however, is the development of an effective participatory strategy. "Strategy" relates to the actual form to be adopted by participatory projects and can be considered to include the type of musical opportunity, the styles of learning and skills development (as well as the extent to which these will be focussed upon) and the opportunities for expression to be provisioned. Within this picture, the key function of human and material resources is to respond effectively to a project's adopted strategy. As one would expect, given the limited funding available to CoMusica, adopted project strategies must also accord with the availability of resources. It also merits noting, at

this juncture, how the levels of funding available to a project determine the degree of flexibility in resource provision and hence the scope for the adoption of varying strategies; where the funding available to a project is scant, the range of practicable strategies is correspondingly circumscribed. Strategy development and resource allocation are thus intimately interwoven.

In instances where funding is available for the acquisition of resources, a most valuable tool in the strategy development process is the use of “taster” sessions. A taster session involves offering potential project participants one-off access to a variety of music making activities. Though time and energy intensive, tasters can provide a relatively effective means of gauging young people’s interest in musical and music-related activities. In the case of the Wooler-based project, a variety of percussion instruments and group playing styles were introduced to the young people attending Glendale Middle School during a taster session held there. Following this taster, the project partnership took the step of advance ordering a set of steel pans and waiting three-months for their delivery. In the meantime, a reduced set of pans was borrowed and driven to and from Wooler on a weekly basis. Thus the project consulted young people and responded to their musical interests. Naturally, the £10,000 made available to the project through CoMusica’s Youth Music funding was also of huge significance in terms of the projects’ adoption of such a strategy<sup>73</sup>. That said the burgeoning strength of the project partnership and the already evidenced enthusiasm of the young people of Wooler served to justify this level of initial expenditure.

A further important element in the success of the Wooler project, in terms of strategy development and human resources, was the mentorship provided to young CM practitioner Helen by one of CoMusica’s most experienced Project Leaders, Tom. His expertise played a role in developing early partnership relations, facilitating communication and assessing the level of commitment forthcoming from Glendale

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<sup>73</sup> The plan originally agreed between CoMusica and its partner, Glendale Middle School, was that the steel pans, representing £10,000 of CoMusica’s core funding, would be moved elsewhere after several years to provide others with participatory opportunities. Given the band’s achievements however, and its not inconsiderable ability to earn revenue, it was subsequently agreed between CoMusica and the project partner that the steel pans would remain in Wooler for an extended period until the project had generated adequate funds to purchase its own pans.

Middle School, as well as subsequently assisting Helen (through providing advice about logistics and a range of other practical matters) throughout the project's first six months.

Tom was there if I needed support or advice and he was brilliant so I basically had like a mentor at the start [of the project]  
(Helen, Project Leader, SteelQuake)

There can be little doubt that the high level of human and material resources provided by CoMusica (which, it must be said, appeared to exceed those of the other cases studies), served to place the Wooler project on an exceedingly sure initial footing. Enhancing the partnership's solid foundation is the input of the SteelQuake band committee that was formed several months into the project's life. The formation of the youth/parent committee was an important step for the project and its scope of activity was immediately and considerably expanded; performances and collaborations further afield could be arranged without placing an excessive burden on lead tutor Helen. Many of the logistical responsibilities initially shared between the project partners were handed over to the committee upon its inauguration and they have remained there since<sup>74</sup>. Latterly, a selected committee sub-group working in consultation with The Sage Gateshead has also been established in order to find further project funding by approaching businesses local to the Wooler area. Given its make-up, the committee brings a wealth of local knowledge and networks as well as specific areas of technical expertise and organisational ability to the project partnership. Alan, who has been involved since the committee's inception, reflects upon his, and others', input:

I have worked hard, basically I've just always been around and offered help wherever it's been needed and I think that Helen has appreciated that and I would expect her to ask me if there was something she wanted done, and I'm usually willing and able to do it...  
(Alan, Parent & Committee Member, Wooler)

The working relationship developed between the Wooler-based CM project and its school partner stands in some contrast to the situation at Redcar. As has been noted

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<sup>74</sup> Transport, finance, gig bookings and most of the bands other logistical and administrative functions are, at the time of writing, handled by the committee and some of its members also attend CoMusica Partner Days, which are organised to facilitate the sharing of ideas and good practice between all the CoMusica project partnerships.

already, the relatively low level of integration of this project with its host school stemmed from the lack of time devoted to planning and strategy development in the project partnership's early stages. At that time, short- to medium-term project planning and strategy development were consequently largely left for CoMusica practitioners to determine alone. One outcome of this situation was that the choice of strategy initially adopted by the project (in terms of musical form, its direction and goals) came about less as a result of youth consultation (no tasters) than simply as a consequence of what, with limited funding, CoMusica was able to provide. The CM strategy developed at Redcar Community College thus came about:

Mainly because we were working with [CM practitioner] Emma and mainly her skills are singing and song writing so that tended to be where we started from.

(Sue, CM Practitioner, Redcar)

As has been noted however, through the adoption of such a strategy, the number of participants of the girls' strand of activity at Redcar remained relatively low throughout the period of fieldwork<sup>75</sup>. In contrast, the boys' activities clearly held the potential to appeal to a greater number of the school's student population (school pupils had already formed around six guitar-based bands at this time and an enthusiasm for rock/punk/indie "band" activity was evident). Indeed, the project partnership appeared to both recognise and yet at the same time ignore some genuine strategy-related concerns right from the outset.

When we first talked to them [the school's young people] about singing in the school there was just no way that any of them were going to do it cos they said they'd just get laughed at...

(Sue, CM Practitioner, Redcar)

Undoubtedly, a decisive element in the partnership's resolution to continue its emphasis on vocal work, despite its fairly limited appeal, was what the CoMusica CM practitioners presumed to be the project's lack of musical making resources:

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<sup>75</sup> Recall how it was noted in Chapter 5 that many of the girls' considered the range of musical activities available within this project to be restrictive. This was, in fact, given as a prime reason for some deciding to suspend their participation.

- M Do resources have a part to play in this as well? I mean, singing, unlike some of the other projects, doesn't cost anything to resource
- R Very handy...that does help definitely, I mean, any project I've ever run has never had many resources.
- (Sue, CM Practitioner, Redcar)

While it is true that the girls' strand of the project was granted few music making resources by the school (only the piano in the music classroom was available), it would not be wholly true to say that this was all that was potentially available; not only did the classroom in which the girls' sessions took place contain around 30 electronic keyboards, but adjoining the very classroom used for the singing sessions was a well-stocked music storeroom (containing glockenspiels, xylophones, percussion instruments, some woodwind instruments and other school instruments). Although these instruments were successfully exploited in one CM session (the girls, collaborating with the CM workers, quickly wrote a short xylophone and percussion piece) no further efforts were made by the project partnership to make use of these pre-existing resources.

The situation described above appears to indicate something of a mismatch between the school's pre-existing resources, the enthusiasms of the young people there and the predominant skills base of the projects CM practitioners. Not only might an expanded range of musical opportunities have been provisioned (through greater partnership negotiation), but these also appeared to hold greater appeal to the project participants than the opportunities being provisioned. In terms of strategy and resources, this project thus exhibited little flexibility or adaptability to young people's *musical habitus*, despite the avenues of exploration open to it.

In both its material and human resources, the Raby Street project held significant potential as a setting for CM activity. The centre has its own DJ decks and in-house p.a., several microphones, records, headphones, a stereo system as well as one communal musical space and another within which small groups can be isolated from the rest of the centre's usual activities. In addition, youth worker contact Danny could offer a very good understanding and knowledge of the young males' music making, its

meanings and associated attractions; Danny had been closely involved with the new monkey scene within recent memory and was clearly seen by the local lads as, if not exactly “one of them”, then certainly one very much *like* them in a way that was difficult to achieve for the non-Bykerite DJ tutors. Indeed, given the lads’ typical group behaviour and their occasional antagonism towards strangers, Danny constituted a resource of potentially high value for anyone hoping to develop music making activities with the centre’s lads. Having followed a CoMusica-run DJing course at the centre several years previously, he was also aware of several key aspects of that projects’ strategy and format which led directly to the willing participation of the centre’s lads and to their enthusiastic participation; factors which were notably missing from the then current project strategy.

With the basic material resources and a particularly suitable support worker already in place, what the project partnership needed to principally concentrate upon was developing clear roles between workers and agreeing a strategy fit to encourage participation. In this, however, the partnership struggled. The outcome was an uninformed strategy of CM engagement in which the CM tutors experimented with numerous approaches without adequately consulting either the young people in the centre or the potentially valuable Danny. The story of the Raby Street project, during the period of fieldwork, was thus one of notably missed opportunities. As a case study, the project illustrates how the presence of appropriate resources alone can count for little in situations where the other key ingredients of effective partnership working are conspicuously absent.

While the potentially instructive Danny went largely under-exploited at Raby Street, at the Galafield centre, key contact and support youth worker Dave was demonstrating some of the problems associated with an overzealous partner worker bringing too great a degree of influence to strategy development. Dave effected several changes to the way the centre hosted CM activities following his appointment and several of these had detrimental effects for the project as a whole. Firstly, the DJing work targeted at the centre’s young male contingent was altered and rescheduled (resulting in dramatically reduced levels of participation) to prevent it coinciding with the girls project. One

upshot of this reorganisation was that, due to a lack of space, the girls' strand of activity would need to be transferred out of the centre. The subsequent relocation of the girls' activities to nearby Kenton School (which three participants attended) was far from ideal however:

There's all sorts of things, from having to sort the [class] room [out], from the whole smoking issue, from their [participants] going off to the loo, from, you know, the bits of things being around on the teachers desk or bits of people's work around...all sorts of things...

(Emma, CoMusica Newcastle-Gateshead Project Leader)

To compound matters, CoMusica had recently lost the laptop upon which half of the group's music making and song writing activities had previously depended; although the Galafield centre did have a laptop computer that the youth manager was willing to put at the projects' disposal, this resource remained unused. While space and material resources were thus proving troublesome, it appeared obvious that what the project required most urgently, in light of its attraction of only four participants, was a reorientation of its strategy of youth engagement. Significantly however, in youth worker Dave's eyes there was no need to for the project to alter its strategy: "as far as I'm concerned, it works". In truth, Dave appeared to assume that the project's problems could be largely attributed to a general despondency characteristic of the young people with whom he worked:

They're just trying to get on and they fall into things that have been arranged for them and [they] end up resenting the vast majority of them...it's just the way that young people's lives kind of operate really, you know...

(Dave, Youth Worker, Galafield)

Dave was correct in this regard – many of the young people attending the centre did appear largely uninterested in the activities that had, as he puts it, "been arranged for them". Yet a key facet of Dave's assumed role was precisely in arranging activities *for* the centre's young people in ways largely in tune with his ideas of musical activity rather than those of potential participants. It is thus somewhat paradoxical for Dave to consider how one of the most unsatisfactory aspects of the project could be attributed to the young people's unwillingness to seize control:



I'd like to see them [the young people] driving it a little bit more rather than just sort of fall into it...I feel like the group themselves should take more responsibility for sort of driving that.

(Dave, Youth Worker, Galafield)

Problematically, the lack of precise agreement about roles and responsibilities within the partnership meant that the project's CM practitioners were ill-placed to temper Dave's heavy-handed approach to CM project strategy. Undoubtedly, more attractive forms of CM provision for both the girls and the area's lads might have been found through greater role clarity and responsiveness to the *musical habitus* of the area's young people<sup>76</sup>.

Taken together, the case studies demonstrate how the relationship between a project's adopted strategy and the resources at its disposal is not necessarily as straightforward as it may, at first sight, appear. That is, the adoption of a strategy requiring few resources, where this is all that appears to be initially available, may actually be less effective in the longer term than the temporary deferral of project initiation, pending the more effective alignment of resources and strategy with the *musical habitus* of potential participants.

#### **6.3.4 Community Music Project Partnerships: Conclusions**

As we have seen, a number of factors come to the fore when considering the effects of project partnerships in structuring key elements of participatory contexts. Of the two projects working within youth centres, and despite the prior relationships established between CM providers and youth centres, the lack of formalisation of working agreements with the Youth Services was problematic, either in terms of communication and commitment, roles and responsibilities or both of these. Where problems arose at the crucial level of communication, further negative impacts could be seen in terms of projects' strategy adoption, partner roles and responsibilities as well as the accessing of appropriate human and material resources (see Table 6.4 below). Naturally, greater

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<sup>76</sup> For the girls, this might have involved making use of the available laptop computer and enlisting the help of the nearby youth agency, "D2", which specialised in providing filmmaking opportunities. The lads' activities, meanwhile, might have benefited from live music event planning or greater use of the centre's radiobroadcast facilities.

formalisation of CoMusica’s relationship with the Youth Services (in the cases of Galafield and Raby Street), or else the dedication of more of project leaders’ time to generating adequate communicative systems (in the case of Redcar) might have benefited projects in such cases.

Table 6.4: Project Partnership Issues

	Raby Street	Galafield	Wooler	Redcar
Adequate partnership communication facilitated?	No	Yes	Yes	No
Adequate partner commitment possible?	No	Yes	Yes	No
Clear understanding of roles?	No	No	Yes	Yes
Appropriate sharing of responsibilities?	No	No	Yes	Yes
Appropriate strategy developed?	No	No	Yes	No
Adequate material resources accessed?	Yes	No	Yes	No
Effective use made of partner human resources?	No	No	Yes	No

While communication and commitment thus brought a considerable influence in terms of strategy development, so too, it must be noted, did CoMusica’s dedication of particularly skilled CM practitioners to specific projects prior to their strategy development. This had the effect of restricting strategy flexibility: a factor whose influence could be subsequently seen to have a bearing upon participant numbers. Where projects demonstrated only low commitment to youth consultation, similar effects were in evidence.

Also emerging as fundamental to more stable partnerships was the sharing of perspectives upon the aims and nature of CM activity. Where youth workers misconstrued, lacked clarity about, or sought to realign project aims, the results tended

to be detrimental to project functioning and undoubtedly left some participants with a lack of focus. That CoMusica's default position in terms of project aims was to concentrate largely upon the development of music making skills meant that project partners could come to feel that their objectives were being effectively sidetracked by CM activity. On occasion, this led partner workers to question the value of CM activity for the young people with whom they worked. Any failure to thus align partner aims with those of CoMusica could be seen to impact negatively upon the development of trust and to reduce partner commitment to the whole endeavour of CM activity. Undoubtedly, this crucial aspect of trust – the sharing of overall objectives – was most clearly in evidence in the school-related projects at Redcar and Wooler (where musical activity was seen as having intrinsic worth) and least evident in Youth Service contexts (where music's use as a tool for addressing broader issues was seen as more important).

Clearly then, the successful functioning of project partnerships can have crucial repercussions in dictating the nature of the opportunities made available to young people within participatory contexts. These principally impact at the level of each of the three elements of participatory contexts highlighted in Chapter 2: space (in terms of the spaces made available for CM activities to take place), provision (in terms of resources, strategies and approach adopted) as well as processes (particularly project development processes). Each of these aspects of participatory contexts goes on to structure the ways in which young people's participation functions in thoroughgoing (if complex) ways.

Drawing back from the complexity and detail of the foregoing discussion, three principal issues emerged as crucial across projects. One concerns the purposes of CM activity. This arose as problematic in instances where there was a lack of clarity or agreement about the aims of the work. One effect of poorly matched purposes was for little trust to develop within partnerships. A second issue relates to ongoing consultative and communicative processes; where local partners felt that they had inadequate information, guidance or input and CM practitioners were isolated in their practice within settings, as a general rule, partnerships were liable to suffer. Finally, where resources within the partnership (primarily time, worker support and music making materials) were most stretched, this had knock-on effects across all aspects of project

planning and review, leading to an overall tendency for projects to use the resources available to them to simply “get by”, consequently denying them the sense of achievement which might feedback into trust, commitment and motivation at the level of the project partnership.

#### **6.4 Community Music Facilitation**

The discussion now turns to a further aspect of CM project provision: the nature of CM facilitation. At issue here are CM practitioners’ approaches to “in-session” CM practice and the nature of their interactions with participants. Before moving on to discuss these in depth, some preliminary comments about CM practice warrant attention. One thing which can be stated at the outset is how, despite the increasing levels of funding directed towards community arts activity in recent years (and the associated expectations of the work), there remain no formal qualification pathways or recognised standards of community arts facilitation at the national level:

There is an enormous amount of activity with different kinds of expertise built up over the years of experiment. There is little overall moderation and no comprehensive overview.

(Everitt 1997: 145)

The situation is no less challenging for those entering or relatively new to this burgeoning sphere of vocational activity:

Provision of appropriate professional development courses, especially in music leadership, has failed to keep pace with the increasing opportunities for education and community work for musicians.

(Youth Music 2002: 16)

That said, a range of CM training opportunities do currently exist in different guises; some larger CM provider organisations offer in-house training courses and CDP (career and professional development) opportunities to their employees<sup>77</sup>, experienced freelance CM practitioners provide specialist weekend and evening courses while a

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<sup>77</sup> Such organisations include The Sage Gateshead. This organisation runs a community music traineeship as well as an apprenticeship. The way in which these courses function, along with broader issues concerning The Sage Gateshead’s recruitment and training of CM practitioners, are outlined in Appendix V.

small number of higher education establishments also offer qualifications in community arts. Although this situation has latterly begun to receive more attention<sup>78</sup>, across the landscape of training and skills development, the picture nevertheless remains underdeveloped.

In order to give an idea of some of the key issues involved in CM facilitation, let us examine the assessment criteria employed by The University of York’s MA course in Community Arts.

Table 6.5: Assessment Criteria of Community Arts MA at The University of York

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| <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. The application of subject knowledge both in terms of their arts form and community arts practice.</li><li>2. The ability to plan a programme of work, carry it out and evaluate its effectiveness.</li><li>3. The ability to work within the host agency, showing an understanding of its aims, objects and professional codes.</li><li>4. The ability to establish working relationships with colleagues and clients.</li><li>5. The ability to form an understanding of clients’ needs and interests and to develop strategies to help them meet those needs.</li></ol> |
|---|

(Source: Cole 1999)

Effectively, the above assessment criteria can be broken down further into three core skills sets: “creative facilitator skills”, “community participatory activist skills” and “responsive practitioner skills”. Although intimately interlinked in practice, in what follows I shall briefly outline the basic concepts at the core of these three skills sets independently.

Creative facilitator skills might be considered, as the name implies, as relating primarily to those attributes and aptitudes used in encouraging creative activity. Of key importance here then, are issues such as the breadth and depth of CM practitioners’ knowledge of and skills in working with music(s) and in different pedagogic styles. Creative facilitators can be considered more skilled where they demonstrate an ability to work not only with a variety of musical forms (i.e., using different instruments, across

<sup>78</sup> In recognition of the paucity of available training opportunities and professional development pathways, Youth Music has established a national project, known as MusicLeader, which disseminates information, advice and guidance as well as creating and highlighting relevant training opportunities for CM practitioners through a number of regional offices.

different musical genres) but also with participants possessing varying levels of skill and in ways appropriate for their particular learning styles. We might also count amongst the creative facilitator's skills an ability to develop creative activities of a less manifestly "musical", yet nevertheless creative nature.

Community participatory activist skills relate to that element of CM project activity most concerned with creating participatory opportunities and attracting participants to projects. As such, the key skills and aptitudes included here bear close comparison to those of any other effective community activist. For a CM practitioner they may thus potentially include knowledge and skills in such areas as communication, financial management, administration and organisation, leadership, industry and sector specific awareness, advertising and publicity, event organisation, health and safety as well as a familiarity with legal, disability and equal opportunities issues. An effective community participatory activist is able to build project allegiance in a group of participants and subsequently develop opportunities of value to them, their local communities and the project.

Responsive practitioner skills can be thought of as underlying and buttressing the two outlined above. That is, while creative facilitation skills and community participatory activist skills are of intrinsic value to any CM practitioner (and indeed, tend to receive the greatest attention in the courses catering for them) an integral ingredient of these skills is a reflective approach to their deployment. In essence, the reflective practitioner facilitates music making opportunities that demonstrate a high level of "fit" with the interests and skills of participants. The fully responsive practitioner is thus not only able to adapt the nature of CM activities to young people's levels of musical ability and interests, but s/he also grasps the character of these interests and abilities and combines this understanding with an appreciation of the ways participants position music, derive meaning from it and subsequently approach the matter of their own creative musical activity. Implicated here are issues of ownership, of identity, of music's role in everyday life and more exceptional instances - in brief, being a responsive practitioner involves comprehending the characteristics embedded in participants' *musical habitus*

and, through this, encouraging what has been termed ‘socio-cultural community development’ (Adams & Goldbard 2001).

A further aspect of the reflective practitioners approach involves recognising the located-ness of their own “take” on music and music making activity with the subsequent acknowledgment of the need to actively consult would-be project participants both before and during a CM projects’ lifetime; the basic democratic idea underpinning this reflective approach is that participants’ involvement in music making activities will be more meaningful and consequential to their everyday lives where they complement, extend and build upon the meaningful everyday content of participants’ pre-existing relationships to music.

The reflective practitioner stance then, positions the CM practitioner more as an *animateur*<sup>79</sup> than as a teacher or leader per se. For those such as Phil Mullen, for example, current chair of the International Society for Music Education’s (ISME) Community Music Activities Commission (CMAC), a primary aim of CM facilitation is the empowerment of participants:

If you believe that a significant part of the purpose of community music is the empowerment and self-actualisation of the individual and the recreation of a true sense of community then even a perception of leader/followers power dynamic can defeat the purpose.

(Mullen 2002)

The breadth of aptitudes and skills which CM workers may thus be called upon to exhibit has led commentators such as David Price, Director of Learning at Liverpool Institute for Performing Arts, to suggest an analogy between the successful community musician and a Swiss Army Knife; both are uniquely specialised precisely because they can do most things (Cole 1999: 6-7).

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<sup>79</sup> The French term *animateur* corresponds to the notion of an artist-organizer who uses both artistic and organizing skills to help the members of a community discover and express their own cultural identities and exercise control over their own cultural development.

In reality, the significant challenges facing CM workers and the relatively modest remuneration they receive often implies that either creative or other personally rewarding aspects of their work play a considerable role in maintaining their motivation and enthusiasm. A natural, common consequence of this situation is for practitioners' creative facilitator skills to coalesce around their own musical passions while, similarly, the reflexive dimension of their work can be limited to social milieus sharing at least some similarities with their own.

#### **6.4.1 Dilemmas of Community Music Facilitation**

Given the plethora of forms that CM activity can take, it will come as little surprise that different CM practitioners tend to approach their practice in different ways. For some, the path to project success lies, first and foremost, in the generation and development of participants' music making skills. By taking this route, it is hoped that participants will experience a sense of personal efficacy leading, in turn, to increased self-esteem. This was the approach adopted by Helen, lead CM tutor with the SteelQuake project:

I think its really important to challenge young people and give them something to do which they can't quite do yet...I don't have a problem with challenging them as in making them play in front of everybody [in CM sessions]...that might be a really scary thing to do for some people but it isn't an issue there because we did it from the start.

(Helen, Project Leader, SteelQuake)

While Helen's approach met with success in the case of the participants of the SteelQuake project, its adoption would not necessarily be as appropriate in CM facilitation which seeks to engage young people with little confidence in music making. This much is recognised, for instance, by Newcastle-Gateshead Project Leader Emma:

There's a lot of young people who we work with for whom the horizon they see is quite kind of close...there are some people that you work with who don't even believe that they can learn something almost, they haven't really gone through that process of achieving or maybe they have but they haven't felt it or known it or they can't attribute that to themselves.

(Emma, CoMusica Newcastle-Gateshead Project Leader)



Emma went on to comment how excessive or poorly matched challenges could impact negatively upon under-confident young people's willingness to return, week-in week-out, to CM sessions. It appears inevitable then, that different approaches to creative facilitation (i.e., those seeking to challenge young people in different ways or to differing extents) will hold relatively greater appeal to some young people than others. Are both practitioners here expressing the viewpoint that one needs to be responsive to particular settings and contexts in presenting appropriate levels of challenge? Not necessarily. In the case of the Wooler project, for instance, as many participants as the project continued to attract over time, a significant number of young people did quit the project after only a short period of participation.

We got a lot of people involved who just couldn't manage their time, you know they're just not gonna be reliable, they're just not in that headspace of looking after their time, so you give them the opportunity, probably the teachers knew they wouldn't stick at it...

(Helen, Project Leader, SteelQuake)

Undoubtedly, at the point in time when participants began to leave the SteelQuake project, its lead CM tutor faced a dilemma: would the project seek to maintain its broad base of participation, catering for around four variously committed and musically able groups (of around 25 participants each) or would it push ahead in improving the quality of music playing, retaining only those young people willing and able to demonstrate the required commitment and ability? This question brings the issues of artistic excellence and simple participation into sharp relief; in community arts circles the issue is most often framed in terms of a product/process dilemma. The dilemma requires CM practitioners to consider the conflict between sometimes laborious and less strictly musically-focussed "process" work and "product" work<sup>80</sup>. No CM practice can ignore such issues; indeed, product is intrinsically linked to process and vice versa<sup>81</sup>. This does

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<sup>80</sup> Prioritising "process" work in CM practice involves primarily seeking to encourage, in participants, some of the fundamental principles of participation – maintaining good behaviour, co-operating, sharing, listening, etc. "Product" work, on the other hand, places music learning and musical progress at its core, setting limits upon the degree to which "process" work will be permitted to obscure this focus.

<sup>81</sup> An arguably inherent feature of CM activity is the stance it adopts with regard to product and process; too great an emphasis on "process" threatens to effectively sideline musical activity, while an exclusive emphasis on "product" may see a project lose sight of its social goals. There thus exists a continuum along which, between the poles of product and process, CM practice typically vacillates.

not, I would argue, preclude questions about the relative weighting given to either product or process in examples of CM practice.

In recent years, there has been a tendency for CM practitioners to concern themselves less explicitly with the process/product debate, instead viewing the two as intimately interrelated. This situation appears to correspond with what Price (2002) refers to as a ‘lessening of the “social activism” that once provided the theoretical underpinning for many [CM] practitioners’ (Price 2002: 3). So how, we might ask, do CM practitioners today negotiate this product/process dilemma? Perhaps a new theoretical approach has emerged, sweeping away old schisms? Not so – Price continues: ‘there is...an increasing absence of any kind of theoretical replacement model’ (Price 2002: 3). In fact, the decline of the social activism fuelling much CM work in the 1970s has been accompanied, especially since 1997, by increased funding with which there has come ‘increased expectation and an emphasis upon “outcomes”’ (Price 2002: 3). The implications of the current situation shall be explored in greater depth as we examine the cases of CM activity studied.

#### **6.4.2 Case Study Facilitation Themes**

This sub-section explores the predominant themes emerging from the actual in-session CM facilitation witnessed across case studies. The themes emerging as most consistently pertinent in this respect are, firstly, *musical habitus* and youth consultation and, secondly, the product/process dilemma. The primacy given to these themes reflects a dual concern to engage with issues surrounding the participation of young people previously excluded from music making activities and to explore some of the challenges facing CM provider organisations charged with this work.

##### ***Musical Habitus and Youth Consultation***

It almost goes without saying, given what has been discussed thus far, that issues of a decidedly musical nature have significant implications for CM facilitation and for projects as a whole. In effect, the choice of musical form(s) that the CM project case studies provisioned could be seen to affect everything from participant numbers and group dynamics to project outcomes and CM practitioner motivation. This occurred

largely by virtue of the relative appeal of the musical forms used and their practical, participatory affordances<sup>82</sup>.

At this juncture, it is worth pausing to note that a common perception and undoubtedly tacit aim of much CM activity is that it engender opportunities for coincident group music making; various forms of percussion and drumming, ensemble playing, group singing, pop and rock group work thus dominate the CM landscape. The assumed benefits of coincident group playing relate back to the basic principles underpinning much CM activity as well as that of associated areas of arts practice, such as group music therapy<sup>83</sup>. Indeed, the practical appliance of these ideas is one of the significant ways in which community music continues to differentiate itself from more formal, one-to-one approaches to music learning. Nevertheless, given the findings of this study, such a reliance upon coincident group playing as *the* paradigmatic form of CM participation would appear to conflict somewhat with the fundamentally social aims of CM activity. The reason for this is that as a form of participation in musical activity, coincident group playing does not necessarily appeal to young people ‘previously denied access to creative music making opportunities for reasons of economic, demographic or geographic exclusion’ (Youth Music 2002). The same might also be said of young people who adhere strongly to musical genres where instances of coincident group playing do not figure amongst the primary ways in which music is used.

Whatever forms CM activity may thus adopt (and engendering coincident group-based music making appeared to figure prominently amongst these for many CoMusica CM practitioners), a more immediately pressing concern for any project seeking, primarily, to encourage youth participation, is to provide opportunities which accord sufficiently with such young people’s *musical habitus* to appeal to adequate numbers of

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<sup>82</sup> “Participatory affordances” refers to the manner in which particular styles of music-making activities, by adhering to the protocols inherent to them, offer specific avenues for participatory activity. Thus while projects using steel pans, for example, typically revolve around instances of simultaneous group playing, projects relying upon the use of DJing activity generally afford the musical space for only one or two DJs to be playing at any particular point in time. Naturally, then, such concerns have important implications for the way CM projects might go about facilitating participation.

<sup>83</sup> As well as encouraging communication skills and providing opportunities for social interaction, instances of group music making, it is claimed, encourage a range of psychological benefits to those involved (Allan & Cope 2004; Cope 1999; Davies & Richards 2002; Pavlicevic 2003) including, for example, reductions in anxiety and depression (Koga & Tims 2001).

participants. Where projects failed to do this, problems surrounding in-session CM facilitation were very much more evident.

Having offered taster sessions in approaching its target participant population, the SteelQuake project verified the appeal of CM activities prior to their provision, consequently bypassing some of the facilitation issues encountered by the other projects. That said, many of the SteelQuake participants did already possess good levels of experience in music making and learning. Furthermore, the eventual participants of the project did not associate, prior to their participation, with a sustained youth musical identity (such as was clearly discernable in Byker), which would imply the need to adopt a more tailored approach. SteelQuake participants' relative ignorance of the form and its representational meanings thus opened up the space for Helen to instil in the project both the musical and what might be termed "musico-social" practices associated with the band's activities (e.g., accepting the hierarchy of band roles such as captain or section leader, attending lengthy practice sessions). As a result, and further embedded by virtue of the good levels of attention and behaviour demonstrated by participants, music making and performance became the project's overriding focus. In this, a format that drew clear and, one might say, traditional roles of participant/teacher and learner/follower was quickly established.

In many ways, the degrees of variance, across many dimensions, between the SteelQuake participants and the young people at Raby Street set the styles of CM facilitation called for in either case into sharp relief. Both in terms of their experiences of music learning and playing, the constraint or autonomy characterising their ideas about worthwhile forms of musical activity, not to mention their classification and evaluation of the musico-social norms associated with this, Raby Street's young people differed hugely from those in Wooler. One crucial aspect of CM facilitation that such differences affected was the way music making actually took place at Raby Street. The nature of new monkey DJing and MCing, for example, meant that only three or four young people could ever be directly engaged in the act of music making at any one time. Evidently then, the lack of flexibility inherent to these young people's approach to music making, when combined with an awareness of the forms of musical activity

compatible with this, calls for an appropriately adapted response on the part of a CM practitioner. Lead CM practitioner Carl however, while skilled in the art of hip-hop DJing and MCing, had little insight into the musical framework applied by a new monkey DJ or MC (a difference in style comparable to that between traditional British folk and flamenco) and struggled to develop appropriate musically participatory activity.

Perhaps least constructive however, in terms of according with the *musical habitus* of participants, was the lead CM practitioners' largely negative attitude towards the young people's preferred music. Carl was new to CoMusica when he took on the role of lead worker at Raby Street and he appeared to largely overlook the programme's commitment to respecting cultural diversity. His distaste for the lads' favoured music and the London-inflected accent common in its MCing style was evident (Carl himself being a proud and broad-accented Geordie hip-hop MC) and he chose to challenge the young people's adherence to it on more than one occasion. Despite his relaxed demeanour, to which many of the young people of Byker appeared to easily relate, the more Carl challenged the lads' musical taste, the less inclined they were to work with him. This is as much a matter of mutual respect as basic pragmatism, when working with such strongly defined youth identities:

It's got to be the young people's choice of music, do you know like, which is [new] monkey, which a lot of [the CM] tutors obviously don't enjoy because they're into more like hip-hop and stuff, but again, if that's your job...

(Danny, Youth Worker, Raby Street)

Indeed, in this and other regards (form and amount of youth consultation instigated, form of practical music skills delivery), the CM project provision at Raby Street, although well-resourced in the material sense, crucially failed to account for and work with participants' *musical habitus*.

In contrast, the centre's youth workers appeared far more conscious of the need to respond to the lads' music-related interests and saw greater scope for encouraging their participatory activity through this. Often, as in the case of the decoration of the centre

with musically inspired motifs, or the “Fusion” DJing competition planned between the younger lads and the youth workers, the latter took the lads’ interest in music as their starting point, successfully engaging them in constructive activities. In fact the Fusion event provided a great deal of insight into the ways in which the younger, less musically confident lads in the centre could be drawn into creative, confidence and skill-building music-related activities. In this instance, and in the temporary absence of the CoMusica CM practitioners from the centre, I worked closely with the youth workers and the lads in the Duke of Edinburgh group to organise and deliver a local music DJing and MCing competition event.

While low on music making skills and confidence, the younger lads were none the less strongly drawn to the musical activity of the area’s older lads. By virtue of this and the associated peer status their involvement in organising a new monkey event would confer upon them, the young members of this group were willing to help design flyers and posters, find, book and decorate a suitable local music venue, print and sell tickets, hire and set up appropriate sound and lighting equipment, organise performers and fulfil any number of other duties. Following the event, those involved spoke of their sense of achievement and their keenness to repeat the experience while almost all expressed a renewed desire to develop their music making skills. The centre’s staff also recognised the value of this kind of music-related activity, seeing it as complimentary to their own aims:

Youth work, for me, is not just about the music...it’s a tool [music] but it’s not the only thing...that’s the whole point of the work I do, it’s about the young people making the decisions for themselves. It might not be good decisions all the time but in the real world, do you know what I mean?

(Janice, Youth Manager, Raby Street).

The success of this event-organising approach to music-related, participatory activity clearly demonstrated that according with the local musical culture of a setting and recognising the participatory affordances of the music-related activities that are positively evaluated by local young people’s *musical habitus* could be considered crucial. As much as the SteelQuake and Raby Street projects thus appeared to have little

in common, one element they undoubtedly shared, concerns the degree of success and participation achievable where the music-related activities provisioned sat well with the predominant and pre-existing local *musical habitus* of participants.

While the SteelQuake project was able to count on the consistent participation of a minimum of around 25 participants per week, and the Raby Street project had begun to demonstrate the potential to do the same, the girls' strand of the Galafield project struggled to maintain the commitment of its four participants. Many of the project's subsequent difficulties can be attributed to its inability to appeal to more than a handful of potential participants. In failing to appeal to a larger participant group with which those taking part would (if they wished to continue their participation) need to fall into step, any sense of focus or progress dissipated and the participatory space became one characterised by struggle. That participant numbers failed to achieve the critical mass necessary to facilitate better group participation was a crucial factor limiting outcomes at Galafield.

From the comments and expressed musical enthusiasms of the other girls at the Galafield centre, it appeared that music-making, per se, was of relatively limited interest. Rather, as was revealed during a session in which I played a series of pop videos to some of the centre's girls (a pragmatic means of encouraging them to talk about music), significant elements of the girls' approach to music consisted, as was mentioned in Chapter 5, of the representational, textual and symbolic meanings to be derived from it. A more amenable way of encouraging these girls' willingness to engage in participatory activity (thereby overcoming critical mass issues) might thus have been through the joint use of musical *and* visual media<sup>84</sup> or by diversifying the nature of the participatory activities on offer in other ways.

The girls' strand of activity at Redcar, although slightly more successful in recruiting participants, can be said to have suffered from similar *musical habitus*-related

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<sup>84</sup> This approach could transform the girl's activity from lyric writing and singing into a more appealing music and video project. This might involve working with a musician to develop backing music (sounds and song structures), designing and creating a *look*, considering performance and self-presentation styles, before going on to plan, organise and execute the production of a short music video clip.

difficulties as witnessed at Galafield. The school-associated nature of the CM activities provisioned at Redcar was perhaps more significant in this respect however. For one thing, several staff/pupil performances in school assemblies made pupils well aware that the most concerted form of CM provision being made available to them was more or less the same as was being taken up by school staff. Additionally, the school setting had the effect of reminding participants of their “in-school” roles and alerting CM practitioners to the far more formal educational approaches typically enacted within this setting. Several specific implications emerged from this. Firstly, participant make-up tended to follow the same lines as academic year groupings. CM worker Sue was aware of the effects of this:

What happens with groups that you set up is that they [group sessions] start to belong to a certain group of kids and therefore that excludes others because they feel it's their group and not theirs. I mean the only thing would be to have like hundreds of groups but obviously it's not capable of doing all that, but at least what we should do is keep trying to do different things so we set up different styles of music.

(Sue, CM practitioner, Redcar)

Unfortunately however, since the range of available practitioner skills remained relatively narrow, CM provision at the school focussed primarily on the vocal-based workshops, and the use of “different styles of music”, of which Sue makes mention, was rarely instigated.

As well as impacting at the level of participant make-up, a further way the aforementioned school-associations affected the project concerned the ways CM worker-participant relations developed. Remaining attuned to the place rules and behavioural habits with which they associated the school setting, participants adopted largely passive, “pupil” roles, generally assenting to the songs, styles and ways of working presented by the CM practitioners. Thus despite the CM practitioners' occasional efforts to involve the group in deliberations, the dynamic remained very much one of leaders-followers. These factors alone may have been sufficient to inhibit the participation of non school-committed pupils (see Roe 1983, 1987, 1992, 1995).



Over time the CM workers at Redcar became increasingly complicit in this developing dynamic; having been privy to the planning sessions that preceded each session, it was clear that the CM practitioners set the agenda of sessions with little awareness of the developing interests of participants. Further thwarting the decision making input of the young people involved was the number of CM trainees working with the group (three CoMusica trainees as well as Sue and Emma); with the trainees keen to prove their worth, almost every music-related decision facing the group was keenly taken up by at least one of the trainees before any of the girls' input could be meaningfully registered. Thus vocal pieces, pre-selected by CM workers for their perceived appropriateness, came to be simply taught in ways affording participants only low levels of creative input and expression. On one occasion this led a participant to remark how much better one vocal piece sounded without any participants' input.

As CM practitioner-participant relations thus approximated a teacher-pupil or leader/follower dynamic ever more closely, the appeal and subsequent range of outcomes of the group's activities appeared to narrow in scope. So embedded had this dynamic become that when, after several months, Rebecca and Charlotte, two of the group's more outspoken participants, did eventually attempt to challenge the status quo, they were considered to be acting like poorly behaved pupils and thus as obstacles to the group's progress. The discord between the activities provisioned and the interests expressed by project participants emerged most clearly as the project partnership sought to encourage participants to demonstrate the products of their involvement (in this instance public performances). It is to the related dynamic of product/process that this discussion now turns.

### ***Products and Processes***

A consistent theme running through both participants' and practitioners' reflections upon in-session CM activity is the dialectic between participation processes and the achievement of specific musical products. In some cases, the opportunities to demonstrate musical products (performances, recordings, gatherings) were portrayed by participants and CM workers as significant generators of project success; elsewhere, they appeared to be focussed upon by practitioners more as indicators, rather than

necessarily generators, of success; where this was the case, the pursuit of products could be seen to impact far from positively on regular project functioning. This was most immediately evident in the cases of the two girls' strands of activity at Galafield and Redcar. In both instances, participants expressed something less than the fullest enthusiasm for the processes of music making employed and consequently displayed reluctance to pursue opportunities to display products.

At Redcar, the musical products achieved through following the CM workers instructions were, for a time, adequate to sustain participants' involvement. However, as participants' academic commitments increased and the perceived extent of their input waned, participant numbers fell and in-session tensions grew. The organisation of a performance opportunity at this time thus served more to highlight some of the project's shortcomings than to spur on further achievement.

It was almost three weeks before they had to perform and we [the group's number of participants] had dropped down to not very many at all, and the night before [the performance]...I carried on phoning until quite late at night, leaving messages with people saying "Please, I need to know who's coming"...we ended up with three.

(Sue, CM practitioner, Redcar)

In this instance, the CM tutors appeared especially keen for the project's participants to attend an upcoming CoMusica Gathering and to produce either a "really polished" performance (Sue, CM practitioner, Redcar) else a large representation of participants (this responded to the largely unspoken consensus amongst CoMusica practitioners that either of these outcomes reflected well upon projects and consequently, themselves as practitioners).

- R I get really jealous of SteelQuake and Boomdang and Seaham [other CoMusica projects] because they always seem to have like armies of kids, I mean I have a lot of sympathy with [the] Newcastle [-Gateshead Project], because I think Redcar probably fits more into that kind of area...I just feel so jealous that they just have armies and armies of [young] people to go to places
- M Is it important to try and get a lot of young people to come along to the gatherings?

- R Well you feel you ought to [laughs] and you want them all to do something together and of course that's not what they wanna do.  
(Sue, CM practitioner, Redcar)

While exhibiting some notable differences, the issues of product/process were similarly problematic in the case of the Galafield project. In this case, it was hoped by the project partnership that a successful performance experience could both reinvigorate the girls' diminishing enthusiasm and, at the same time, present the unsteady project partnership with a tangible end result.

- M What were you looking to achieve with the group?  
R Erm, that they accessed the big days [CoMusica Gatherings]. We've worked with them for a long, long time...I don't think performance is the be-all and end-all, I think it's part of the process as opposed to the end point, but that they achieved that...was massive.

(Emma, Project Leader, Galafield)

Lead CM tutor Emma and youth worker Dave were subsequently very satisfied with the girls' efforts; they had overcome a nerve-racking experience and maintained their composure. Unfortunately however, as was noted in Chapter 5, this experience of public performance did little to increase the girls' confidence and in fact made two of the group's members more critical of their own musical abilities and efforts than ever. While both Dave and Emma thus considered the girls performances to have been successful, the fact that within a month of the experience three of the projects' four participants had decided to completely quit their participation cannot be ignored.

Having overcome any obstacles associated with attracting and maintaining the commitment of participants, the SteelQuake project had, long before fieldwork began, placed the achievement of good quality musical products at its heart. While the project did need to instil effective music learning processes to achieve this, one side-effect was to limit the scope of other participatory processes. Thus, early into the project's lifetime, the weighting on the side of product over process had the effect of reducing the number of young people involved; when less consistently dedicated young people were absent from practice sessions, Helen saw little reason to sacrifice the pursuit of musical excellence. This typically implied the departure, from the project, of those participants

with neither the time management skills to attend sufficiently regularly, nor the adequate natural ability to catch up on what they had missed. In some respects, the meritocratic implications of such an approach appear out of step with the espoused aims of a project seeking to provide music making opportunities to those previously excluded from them. Surely a better way to seek to engage young people lacking time management or music learning skills would be to stagger the challenges facing them, scaffolding their participation in ways that would both encourage their continued participation and be found manageable by them.

At Raby Street, issues of product/process were far less controversial. One reason for this was the unequivocal attitude adopted by many of the young people attending the centre towards the music making opportunities provided. That is, since the project remained focussed upon developing an appropriate format of CM activity during the period of fieldwork, the matter of developing musical products was largely inconsequential. Interestingly, the Fusion event did provide insights about the scope of music-related activity (i.e., organising cultural events) in developing opportunities for meaningful processes of youth participation, especially so in instances where young people's confidence in manipulating musical materials is low. Significantly, the demonstration of CM product work did not, in this instance, involve young people of low musical ability and confidence being asked to perform. Rather at Raby Street, those performing were older, previous project participants who had followed a well-organised DJing course.

There is little doubt that opportunities to demonstrate project products can set achievable short-term goals for projects, encouraging participants to focus their attention and strive to improve the quality of their own, and others' participatory contributions. As has been illustrated however, it is far from necessarily the case that the products and processes of CM activity fit together in a seamless way; indeed in some circumstances, an emphasis on the achievement of products could be seen to jar with young people's ongoing activity and be far from welcomed by them. From the cases studied, it also appears clear that opportunities for demonstrating the products of CM work can bring about positive outcomes in instances where, firstly, such opportunities were well aligned with ongoing project processes, where they were seen

by participants as being of value to them and, finally, where they would not be found excessively challenging. All three of these criteria were fulfilled in the case of the Wooler project. In cases where the balance between young people's *musical habitus*, genuinely participatory in-session processes and opportunities to demonstrate products was not well maintained, the effect could be generally deleterious: at Galafield problems developed as a result of both participants' low confidence levels and, as was the case at Redcar, their valuations of the musical products in question. In both cases, these issues could be traced back to problems at the level of participatory processes, and especially to participants feeling a lack of control over the creative process and its expressive content. Products and processes might thus be best viewed as neither necessarily oppositional, nor completely devoid of conflicting elements; rather, we must take the nature of products into serious consideration and ask what they will be, why they are of value (to the larger process of CM activity) and for precisely which ends they are to be pursued.

### **6.5 Steps to a Future: Continuation and "Sustainability"**

This final section addresses the prospects for the continuation of the CM projects studied; principally, we shall examine the extent to which stakeholders envisaged a future for the projects they were involved in and what, if any, steps were taken to ensure the best chances for projects to continue or expand their activities. A brief background discussion of "sustainability" precedes examination of the four case studies.

Sustainability has become something of a buzzword across the community arts in recent years (Jermyn 2004), despite the fact that there appears to have been very little serious discussion about what the notion precisely involves as far as community arts projects are concerned. In some instances, a commitment to sustainability appears to refer to CM provider organisations' commitment to their own sustainability rather than necessarily that of their community-based projects. Assuming that a commitment to sustainability does refer to the latter, there still remains, surrounding the notion, a good degree of opacity. Firstly, any commitment to sustainability must always be understood against a backdrop of the finite resources at community arts organisations' disposal and their concern to use these resources in ways that fulfil their obligations to funders. Secondly,

sustainability in the sense of the complete autonomy of a community-based project (in terms of finance and resourcing) is difficult to envisage in the short term – even at the highly successful Wooler project, full sustainability, independently of any CoMusica input, is only conceivable within a minimum of around ten years<sup>85</sup>. Given that most of the local projects with which CoMusica was involved relied heavily upon the latter's human and material resources, one cannot imagine their continuation, as CM projects, without continued input. Most talk of sustainability within CM circles then, tends not to necessarily imply the achievement of complete self-sustainability on the part of locally-based projects.

An alternative way of conceiving of the path towards sustainability might thus be in terms of the responsibilities that CM provider organisations hand over to actors from within local communities. Where the material resources required by a project come to be provisioned independently of CoMusica, this could be considered one step; where local residents or support workers relieve CM workers of specific tasks, a further step would have been taken. Eventually, as we move further along this path to complete self-sustainability, experienced project participants or partner support workers might come to relieve CoMusica staff of their CM facilitation duties, thereby allowing them to focus their attention on the establishment of new projects. At this point, all activities relating to project provision and the creation of musical or music-related activity would lie with local communities themselves. This picture of sustainability might, however, be described as somewhat optimistic; in reality, much depends, in an ongoing way, upon the role of CM practitioners and the funding which supports their work.

In many ways, the manner in which CM provider organisations approach CM activity are predetermined by their funding agreements. While some seek to work most effectively through encouraging short, intensive bursts of activity, others dislike the idea of “parachuting” into communities only to depart shortly after. This typically leads them to seek a more sustained approach. The adoption of either tactic remains largely dependent upon the levels of funding made available and its longevity. In the case of

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<sup>85</sup> This number is an estimation which responds to the amount of time likely to be needed for the level of musical knowledge, skill and teaching ability to be transferred from a CM practitioner to a project participant able to pass that knowledge and skill on.

CoMusica, while Youth Music Action Zone funding was provided to support three-year periods of activity, in the second three-year funding period, supplementary or “match” funding was also sought from within local communities in order to enable the continuation of projects. As much as Youth Music’s funding could be relied upon within three-year periods, however, due to its shorter term nature, no such assurances could be made of match funding. Furthermore, since there was no certainty that Youth Music funding would continue to be provided to CoMusica beyond each three year block, little could be planned to extend beyond this period of time. This did, nevertheless, afford CoMusica time to develop strategies for the exit from or continuation of projects within each three-year funding block.

Where CoMusica states its aims with reference to “sustaining”, the intention is: ‘To create robust, sustainable models of activity that can build on the links established throughout the project’ (Appendix I). For CoMusica, this aim is gauged through the achievement of two things. One is an ‘identifiable process through which work is refined and improved’ (Appendix I). This implies the continuation of projects and of CoMusica’s involvement with them. The second is thorough the development of ‘clear exit strategies for each project’. This implies little beyond the removal of CoMusica provision; neither whether projects will end when the exit strategy is implemented, nor whether they will sustain beyond the removal of provision. It can only be assumed, then, that both project continuation and project cessation were, in some way, anticipated. Given the variety of factors that may serve to reduce the effectiveness of projects, the adoption of such a default position is perfectly reasonable. To understand the opportunities and threats facing projects’ chances of longer-term survival, we must look more closely at individual cases. In what follows, the prospects for each case study’s simple continuation and progress along the path to fuller self-sustainability are explored.

### **6.5.1 Continuation at Raby Street**

Given the preceding account of the CM activities at Raby Street, the project might be described as encountering a good degree of success in the past but, during fieldwork, falling short of its potential. Given CoMusica’s ongoing commitment to working with

the Raby Street centre, any future concern to sustaining the project would thus first seek to re-engage successfully with the young people in the centre and regain the confidence of the centre's staff. Several steps had been already taken along this road shortly prior to the end of fieldwork. Following the departure of CM practitioner Carl from the project, Newcastle-Gateshead Project Leader Emma held her first face-to-face review and planning meeting with the centre's Youth Manager, Janice, with the latter subsequently feeling much more positive about the future of the centre's relationship with CoMusica:

[we're going to have] more meetings...so every three months, whoever's been doing work with the tutors [CM Practitioners] gets together and we talk about how things are going any problems any issues and try to see how we can support each other putting on events or whatever.

(Janice, Youth Manager, Raby Street)

An important step for the centre was Janice's ability to commit more time to Partner Days and partnership meetings. In theory, this would facilitate better communication within the partnership and enable improved project learning, greater clarification of roles and responsibilities as well as expanding, through collaborating with other Newcastle-Gateshead projects, the range of opportunities open to the young people at Raby Street. Indeed, with CoMusica coming ever closer to formalising a working relationship with the Newcastle Play and Youth Service, the Raby Street project appeared to be turning a corner:

It [formalisation of CoMusica's relationship with Newcastle Play and Youth Service] is definitely a thing that we've been working towards and working on and there's positive things coming back now. It's taken a while to get up to that point, but we're looking at it, yeah...

(Emma, CoMusica Newcastle-Gateshead Project Leader)

In fact, the project had already been given a firm indication of one of the directions in which it might move following the collaborative organisation of the Fusion event. During this process, it became clear that small-scale local event planning and execution had an important part to play in putting young people's enthusiasm for music-related activity to positive ends; especially so where participation in music making activity was initially perceived by young people as particularly challenging.



Through an increased commitment to project partnership, more appropriate input for the centre's key youth workers could also be facilitated. While responsibility for musical skill development would rest with CM workers, youth workers could be fruitfully involved by providing a consultative role regarding some of the pragmatic aspects of CM project delivery:

It does need to have a separate time...where the young people know if they're coming in to learn how to DJ, that's what they're coming in to do.

(Danny, Youth Worker, Raby Street)

I think that [the project's previous success] was because it was on a separate night and I think it was because of the way they [the lads] were actually trained at the beginning...they never forgot that.

(Janice, Youth Manager, Raby Street)

Following the renegotiation of previous partnership difficulties, the project promised significant improvement. At the same time however, it appeared clear that there remained in place, and understood by both sides of the project partnership, a power dynamic that placed the lion's share of project decision making in the hands of CoMusica and left the youth centre somewhat in the dark about the project's longer-term future.

Being quite naïve, I suppose I'm quite happy to work alongside CoMusica in whatever form and as many times as they can obviously supply a tutor...I suppose for them it will come a day when maybe they don't want any contact with Raby Street cos it's not really going down the road that they want, I don't know...

(Janice, Youth Manager, Raby Street)

Undoubtedly, only a continued commitment to the Raby Street project by CoMusica would allay such fears and build a greater level of trust within the project partnership.

### **6.5.2 Continuation at Galafield**

The signs at Galafield were less immediately positive. By the end of fieldwork, levels of participation had dwindled and CM worker Emma's departure had left two considerably less experienced CM apprentices behind to continue CoMusica's work. At

the close of fieldwork, no new strategies for project recruitment or processes of youth consultation had been developed (something the project appeared to urgently require), despite the fact that the CM sessions' format had undergone a considerable shift, returning to laptop-based song writing and recording work based within the youth centre.

The potential for project improvement was nevertheless evident, in however latent a form. As was the case at Raby Street, for example, although it was not immediately offered to CM practitioners, the Galafield centre's youth workers' specific knowledge of the area's young people could offer valuable insights:

The people that are involved in it [the CM project] are of an age where they are impressionable, where I think, you know, the mass media, have a real impact on their lives through music, ad-culture, TV, film and so I think its something that they can relate to and if they think that there's something there that they can actually participate in and feel like it's alright, then that's an attractive option to them.

(Dave, Youth Worker, Galafield)

While youth worker Dave appeared to understand how many of the centre's girls' attraction to music-related activity owed more to elements of its mediation, its representations and symbolism, than necessarily to its sonic attributes, he was also aware that this would need to be supplemented by an appropriate format of CM project delivery for it to be of real value: "it [the centre's relationship with CoMusica] is something we could really, really build on and turn into something really, really special. I'm not sure how we'd do that mind" (Dave).

Despite harbouring the specific knowledge capable of providing CM practitioners with insights into alternative ways of engaging the centre's young people, Dave's in-session role remained vague. Though the support he provided was valued in some respects, the incumbent workers expressed reservations about his role within the project partnership; reservations undoubtedly issuing, in part, from these apprentices' relative lack of experience in partnership working and the lack of clear role demarcation inherent to this relationship. To remedy this situation several key steps would need to be taken, the first

of these naturally being to clarify the nature and scope of Dave's role as project support worker.

In addition to the reorientation of worker roles, there existed a clear need, at Galafield, to shift CM provision more into line with the *musical habitus* of the girls at the centre. This issue is less straightforwardly resolvable however, since it would risk bringing the project's activities into conflict with the stipulations of CoMusica's funders. That is, given the lack of overlap between the *musical habitus* of the girls with the approach specified by CoMusica's principal funding body (i.e., to employ 'structured music-making activities that develop children and young people's music skills.' Youth Music 2005), it was difficult to see by what means the project could generate higher levels of participation. As has been demonstrated, the appeal of music-related activity lay, for most of the Galafield girls, away from music playing and learning per se.

The situation at Galafield indicates one of the ways in which Youth Music's espoused commitment to 'establish a legacy of music making opportunities in areas of social and economic need' (Youth Music 2005) may call for broader CM provision than that of simple 'structured music making activities'. In essence, the "social and economic need" characteristic of the Galafield area plays a significant part in engendering mid-teen, female *musical habitus* of a sort ill-suited to the basic provision of music making opportunities. This appears to be an element of CM project functioning of which CoMusica project leaders were not wholly unaware:

There's also space for kind of letting it [a project] go a bit and that's a hard thing to learn...what you do is about opening doors and engaging people in participation but...different people have different interests.

(Emma, CoMusica Newcastle-Gateshead Project Leader)

Although CoMusica's partnership with the Galafield centre was set to remain in place for the foreseeable future then, fundamental issues pertinent to planning, worker roles and project provision appeared in need of attention as far as the girls' strand of activities was concerned; indeed, without appropriate responses to these issues, levels of participation looked set to remain low.

### **6.5.3 Continuation at Wooler**

The information already provided about this project will undoubtedly leave the reader with few fears for its immediate future. The project's format was well-established and as successful in maintaining current participants' enthusiasm as it was at attracting new recruits and developing the involvement of parents. Indeed, with the firm commitment of around 25 young people and a team of highly supportive and resourceful adults, not to mention a proven fundraising capability and clearly defined sense of identity and purpose, the project's future was, towards the end of fieldwork, looking relatively rosy:

We've got to the point now where it [the project] makes money so nobody feels under threat and Helen doesn't appear to be looking to go elsewhere so as long as Helen's around it's probably gonna sort of flourish...

(Alan, Parent and Committee Member, Wooler)

That said, one potential obstacle facing the project were suggestions that the government was looking to reconfigure Northumberland's three-tier education system, thereby implying the possible closure of Glendale Middle School and loss of the pan yard as a base for SteelQuake. Given the uncertainty surrounding this issue combined with the project's desire to expand the scope of its activities and achieve greater self-sufficiency, a plan to generate further funding was hatched by the project committee. Significantly, in this few further demands would be placed upon CoMusica, beyond the contribution of expertise concerning fund raising and sponsorship:

As a committee we sort of thought "Well, yeah there's a lot of things that we wanna do to improve the facilities for the band", that's a major part of it, and improve the transport, get minibuses and things like that, you know, really make it a self-sustainable outfit and we've spoken to [The] Sage [Gateshead]...saying "What more help can you give us?" so, that's one reason why we had the meeting a few weeks ago about fundraising, how we attract money in, proper money to sort out minibuses and buildings...

(Alan, Parent and Committee Member, Wooler)

Such plans give an indication of the significant level of autonomy that had already been generated within the project and the high level of decision making power that had been successfully devolved from Helen and CoMusica to its host community. In fact, the

project consistently plans well in advance of its immediate horizons, maintaining a clear and shared vision of its possible future:

Helen and me were sat about thinking “Well this is what steel bands do in Trinidad what can we learn from that and take back to Wooler?” So we had a great big long wish list of all the things that we wanted to do and we’re sort of gradually working our way through that list ...

(Alan, Parent and Committee Member, Wooler)

In effect, the shared, driving philosophy behind the project (“I want it to be recognised as excellent” - Helen, Project Leader), which, in line with Youth Music’s agenda, placed the development of musical skills at its core, met with considerable success in Wooler. As a result, of the four projects studied, SteelQuake came closest to achieving autonomy and sustainability in the full sense (i.e., in terms of finance, resources, locally devolved decision making and so on). That said, the significant resources placed at this project’s disposal (consider, for example, how CoMusica’s high level of capital investment for steel pans was crucial in enabling the generation of revenue) combined with the high levels of social capital held and offered by the host community, suggest that the project’s achievements must be put into perspective. In circumstances where a project’s capital input is less generous or local communities are characterised by greater levels of deprivation, similarly far-reaching outcomes ought not necessarily be expected.

#### **6.5.4 Continuation at Redcar**

Several factors indicate that the project at Redcar was still relatively early into its development at the close of fieldwork and still held considerable promise. Immediately worthy of note, in this regard, is the dedication of formal responsibility for liaising with arts organisations of an experienced and musically inclined teacher. With this came increased scope for development of the school’s relationship with CoMusica:

Everything we do is rushed, you know, it’s the nature of the secondary school and we do an awful lot of sort of shooting from the hip...it would be nice to have a more relaxed planning session...that will come in eventually.

(Creative Art Programme Director, Redcar)

At the level of personality and attitudes, the input of the school's Creative Art Programme Director as project partner is a cause for optimism – he was seen by many of the young people in school as the “go-to” man as far as non-curricular music was concerned and he was keen to expand school-based music making opportunities beyond their traditionally narrow boundaries.

Whenever we do the competitions, these sort of open-mic type competitions...it's really interesting to see the range of things that children bring. Some of them will do sort of modern dance-pop stuff, other kids will do more traditional ballad style singing, some kids will do the rock bands but...there are a lot more children doing music...than I knew about.

(Creative Art Programme Director, Redcar)

In addition, the school's Creative Art Programme Director was conscious that the nature of the particular forms of musical activity adopted and the development of specific skills were both of less immediate importance than the active engagement of the young people at Redcar:

The big thing is, is to see kids actively doing something as presenters of themselves...also actually watching them build up confidences and build up the kind of self-esteem that this particular area needs.

(Creative Art Programme Director, Redcar)

At the same time, the facilities currently being offered by Redcar Community School would soon be revitalised following the completion of an on-site £1.7m capital development project, set to include music and dance studios. This offered considerable scope for the development of further streams of CM activity at Redcar.

Really, the numbers that would like to do this are much higher than the numbers who actually do it in all cases...when the facility for that exists I think we'll see a lot more children involved.

(Creative Art Programme Director, Redcar)

Furthermore, following the installation of Sue as new project leader, along with the allocation of further funding, the previous format of CM participation was due to undergo considerable change. Principally, following discussions with the Creative Art

Programme Director, it was evident to Sue that the format previously adopted by the CoMusica project was successful in appealing to only a limited demographic of the young people at Redcar:

I know it's a certain type that come back after school, I know that we're also not hitting the really tricky ones...there's a whole element that we're not working with...

(Sue, CM practitioner, Redcar)

Given the drive and enthusiasm witnessed in the schools' commitment to the provision of excellent facilities and dedicated staff to the development of arts activities (whose espoused aim is to engage as many young people as possible), one would expect the partnership with CoMusica to develop apace. Given the levels of funding being made available in Redcar, longer-term plans for CM activity could be developed, widening access and opportunity considerably. That said, there would undoubtedly need to be some recognition of the school's specific aims in terms of CoMusica's CM practitioner provision; given the school's emphasis on widening the scope of the activities available, this implies the provision of CM workers adequately skilled to engage successfully with the majority of area's young people, both in terms of their communication skills, granting the young people involved decision making input and, most importantly, appealing to the salient elements of their *musical habitus*.

## **6.6. Conducting the Tune: Conclusions**

As has been demonstrated, in practice, CoMusica's commitment to sustainability involved a stronger desire to generate an 'identifiable process through which work is refined and improved', than to develop 'clear exit strategies for each project' (Appendix IV); most often, projects and partnerships sought to overcome problems inherent to them and develop appealing participatory opportunities in line with the resources at their disposal. That said, threats to project continuation could arise from a number of sources: low levels of youth participation, problems with facilities, loss of area-specific funding or difficulties arising out of working relationships with partners.

Further, since CoMusica was responsible for delivering forms of CM activity whose primary focus was the development of music learning and participation, there did also

emerge the clear feeling, amongst practitioners, that perceptions of project success depended largely upon their ability to either generate music performances of a good standard or else to encourage high levels of project participation. Consequently, where participatory opportunities appealed to only low numbers of young people, the generation of valued musical products appeared, in participants' estimations, to receive an unwarranted amount of emphasis from CM workers. To some extent, this was the case with the Galafield and Redcar girls groups.

In such circumstances, at the root of projects' difficulties was an initial failure to recognise and appeal appropriately to the *musical habitus* of a majority demographic of potential participants. Looking at the pressures and strains of CM provision objectively, there appear to be a number of compounded reasons why situations of this kind could arise. Setting the wheels in motion is the search for project funding; this often directs CM providers to undertake work in variously "deprived" communities. As we have seen however, where project partnerships together disposed of inadequate resources (such as time, space or staffing), they could be in danger of getting off on an unsure footing. Where this occurs, it also implies a lack of time to devote to project planning processes. The potential result is the adoption of a strategy of youth participation that either fails to attract a critical mass of local young people (e.g. Galafield), or else does so yet fails to encourage their participation in an engaging enough way to benefit from their sustained commitment (e.g. younger lads at Raby Street, Redcar girls). In cases such as the latter, an absence of greater consultative input on the part of young people (for whatever reasons) could also threaten to undermine the scope of projects' appeal as well as the range of participatory strategies projects saw as open to them. In turn, this resulted in projects working in ways that fell out of step with young people's musical valuations and creative intentions.

With limited time, the intermittent support of partnerships and imperfect knowledge of young people's interests and experiences, CM practitioners may, in such situations, also find themselves equipped with inadequate levels of experience or knowledge to deal with the range of challenging tasks – tasks requiring tact, diplomacy and reflexivity, not to mention organisation, facilitation and musician skills. The situation facing CM



projects set within deprived social contexts where partnerships are based on informal contracts rather than the 'willing' support of comparatively social capital-rich communities is thus not an easy one. Indeed, it is made all the more difficult by the evaluative burden generally placed upon CM practitioners by their funding bodies. Where they failed to encourage the participation of numerous young people, these demands could be seen to encourage CM workers, in perfectly reasonable ways, to look to focus participatory activity towards the creation of more "polished" musical products.

Relating the matter of musical products to that concerning degrees of youth participation, there appeared, across several of the cases, to be a sense in which the urge to generate musical products of a certain standard (or type) diffused the potentially galvanising effect more enthusiastic forms of participation might have brought to projects. Indeed, on occasion, young people's musical achievements appeared to be valued more by the adults associated with projects than by participants themselves. At the level of partner or local community support for in-project activities, the significance of this point should not be underestimated. For instance, the one project that managed to involve parents to any significant degree (i.e., Wooler) provisioned CM activities and made musical achievements that sat well with both parents *and* young people's understandings of worthwhile musical activity. Meanwhile, that project promising most in the successful involvement of appropriate youth worker input (i.e., Raby Street) had already witnessed project outcomes that were positively valued by the adults involved, this time in the form of youth work aims. Similarly, at Redcar, the Creative Art Programme Director's recognition of how the outcomes of young people's music-related activities fed into increased confidence and improved exam results meant that the school eventually created a role allowing him greater time to devote arts development. In each of these three cases then, projects whose partners or key stakeholders had witnessed CM activity's ability to make a contribution to their own objectives<sup>86</sup> at first hand demonstrated a good degree of resilience against threats to their continuation. With regard to the quality of support from host settings then, the situation appears to be one in which success, or at least the imminent promise of success

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<sup>86</sup> These differing, yet equally fulfilled objectives consisted, primarily, of musical skills development at Wooler, contribution to young people's non-music related learning and decision making at Raby Street and improved confidence and exam results at Redcar.

(in terms of fulfilling project partners' aims), breeds further success. Clearly, the input of host partners was crucial in sustaining projects' activities.

Taking together some of the important factors serving to sustain and develop the CM project case studies, there emerges a picture of key factors bringing relative threats or opportunities to the matter of project sustenance. As we have noted above, one of these concerns appropriate partner input (in terms of degree, quality and the trust built). The nature of the local pools of capital or resource held by host communities is a further key factor (see section 5.5) liable to provide projects with opportunities for progress and development (e.g., Wooler) or, through its conspicuous absence, threats to continuation. The nature of the funding made available to projects and the directives associated with it also carry relative threats and opportunities to different projects; where the aims and objectives tied to project funding sits well with participants, partners and other stakeholders, projects benefited on the whole. In cases where CM practice was seen, however, to be failing to fulfil the aims established for it, pressures of a counter-productive nature arose around the work that threatened to undermine the whole participatory endeavour. In light of the above opportunities and threats, we must also recognise the constraint or autonomy of young people's *musical habitus* as a potential threat or opportunity to project success and continuation, especially when considered in respect of the experiences, skills, knowledge, reflexivity and *musical habitus* of CM project leaders. When these are considered in tandem, together with other questions of resourcing and facilities, there emerges a picture of variously viable or unworkable participatory strategies, each of which implies threats to sustainability or opportunities for project development. Numerous hurdles must thus be overcome in developing effective and valued musical participation, especially so in contexts already characterised by significant levels of social deprivation. Naturally, the nature of these hurdles impels us to consider ways in which they might be successfully negotiated. This is one of the themes to be taken up in this thesis' final chapter.

# CHAPTER 7: THE STATE OF PLAY

## 7.1 Introduction

This thesis has adopted something of a critical stance towards many aspects of the community music activities studied. Looking back to reflect on the content of the preceding chapters and tallying this with my own experiences of community music activity, I recognise that the emphasis throughout may be in danger of lying too much on the side of critique and not enough on the side of credit. After all, even in the cases where participants revealed problems and recognised areas for improvement in their CM activity, most of those I spoke to nevertheless kept up their participation, some for considerable periods of time. This fact alone says much about the value of opportunities for community music participation in young people's lives. Even where particular boosts to young people's self-esteem or confidence were not particularly pronounced, the opportunities provided were still valued and in almost all cases they impacted on young people's lives in broadly positive ways: they provided keenly sought opportunities for socialising, room for engaging with talented musicians and brought fresh perspectives, much enthusiasm and genuine aspiration to contexts in which young people's out-of-school musical activity was previously low on the agenda. It may be that the critical focus applied in previous chapters has, at points, obscured these important benefits from the reader. This was not my intention. Rather, where I have been critical, this issues from a desire to see the recent upsurge in community music activity fulfilling its potential.

Undoubtedly, lying behind some of the assessments made of project partnerships or of the participatory strategies adopted, is an appreciation of the potential of community music to facilitate opportunities for considerable numbers of young people to pursue, in a sustained, committed and communal way, cultural activities of genuine significance to them. These are activities through which young people may not only develop many of the virtues of associational life but at a more fundamental level, find reasons to take pride in themselves and to discover, through participation, a faith in their ability to learn, to come to decisions, to demonstrate commitment and importantly, to express their ideas and their attitudes.

This last point is key – as much as music acts as a differentiator within society, a means through which actors set themselves apart from others or group themselves together, where actors’ differentiation takes place against the backdrop of a meaningful and secure cultural identity and a relatedly meaningful set of social ties (whatever form these may take), “others”, or “out-group” members, tend to be seen much less as a threat or challenge. Obviously, social comparison will inevitably continue to take place, yet its potential import is generally far less damaging to those who take a sense of pride in what they see themselves as both characterised by and standing for. This standpoint recognises the value of positive cultural identities. Where, on the other hand, individuals’ and groups’ identities and the cultural forms and activities of value and meaning to them are ignored or demeaned, the likelihood of actors seeing themselves as marginalized, victimised and powerless are ever greater and the effects of this for them and for society as a whole cannot fail to be broadly detrimental. This is an argument about cultural democracy and the importance, to actors, of feeling represented and recognised within society – its basis lies in the belief that well-defined cultural identities and active participation in cultural life are essential elements of community development. They are an important means through which disenfranchised members of society can come to feel a greater sense of self worth and empowerment. In this respect, my own findings fall into step with those of others concerned with such matters (e.g., Adams & Goldbard 2001). Given the omnipresence of issues related to cultural democracy in the foregrounding substantive chapters of this thesis, I would like take this idea(l) forward in drawing out the implications of this study’s key findings.

The current chapter thus progresses in the following way: firstly, I return to the aims of the study, highlighting where and in what ways the questions posed at the thesis’ outset have been answered. Following this, I move on to pay particular attention, in turn, to the implications of the study’s findings for practice, policy and theory. Next I discuss some of the limitations of the study and the avenues open to future research on community music practice before closing with a personal reflection on the study as a whole and the current challenges facing community music.

## **7.2 Aims and Findings**

As was highlighted in this thesis introduction, despite the growth of interest in community music activities over recent years, it has nevertheless been subject to little sustained, critical investigation, especially from within the social sciences. More specifically, no previous academically informed studies have sought to directly address the community music participation of young people in so sustained a manner as this thesis. In this respect, the implications of this study's findings for theory, policy and practice make genuinely original contributions to this burgeoning area of study. Approaching the matter of community music participation from the perspective of academic inquiry, a number of key areas arose as warranting attention. This section reaffirms those aims and demonstrates the means through which they have been met.

A first concern, given the status of current policy debates on the matter of community music's outcomes, was that of gaining a clearer understanding of precisely how young people might benefit from music making activity. In recognition of the variety of forms that community music activity might take however, it became clear that questions relating to outcomes needed to transcend a simple input-output approach or one looking to ascertain "intermediate" level outcomes (Boviard et al. 1997), focussing instead on a more fundamental component of actors' engagement with cultural activity – the meanings ultimately derived from them. Whilst seeking to uncover the motivational bases and meanings tied up in young people's approach to music making, there also arose the need, in order to account for the whole effect of community music participation for actors, for an appraisal of the other domains of young people's lives with which music-related meanings resonated.

An important element in the adoption of such an approach, and in responding to the aims it suggests, was an appreciation of the methodological requirements that responding to such issues would involve. In this, the important role of sustained participant observation, informal discussion and a broadly quasi-ethnographic approach to the matter of qualitative data collection must thus be noted for its efficacy in uncovering the numerous aspects of young people's lives that connect with the matter of music's significance and the substantive content of the meanings it encourages.

Generating a response to the above-outlined set of interrelated concerns formed the first aim of the study, one crystallising around the concept of *musical habitus*. The particular intention lying behind the development of the concept of *musical habitus* was to develop a theoretical framework of value to those attempting to understand the factors determining young people's participation decisions and the implications of these for the development of participatory processes and outcomes.

Having modified Bourdieu's concept of habitus in order to apply it directly to musical experience in Chapter 2, in Chapter 4 the key, indeterminately *structuring* processes of *musical habitus* were explored with reference to the testimonies provided by the young people involved in the study. Here I elucidated the ways in which the attitudes and dispositions expressed and demonstrated by young people towards different aspects of music and musical activity corresponded to the salient elements of their *musical habitus*. This was achieved through an exploration of young people's experiences of prior musical socialisation, through musical activities undertaken within educational contexts, as well as in respect of the social dimensions of their musical lives (musical ties) and the broader currents of consumption and genre-allegiance to which they were inclined.

Through the above approach it was possible to gain an appreciation of the variable role played by different aspects of musical and music-related activity in providing young people with meanings of a sort that resonated, in particular ways, with other domains of experience and action. In this, the meanings of music and music-related activity for young people, both in terms of its inherent sonic and textual/representative components was assessed, as were the ways music's meaning spilled over into other significant aspects of experience and action: these included such things as rites of passage (Raby Street), adolescent male-female relations (Galafield) emotional self-management (Redcar lads) and friendship building (Wooler). Although many of the meanings brought to music and music related activities by young people initially appeared idiosyncratic, patterned tendencies could also be discerned in the ways different groups of young people located meanings in music and musical activities. This strategy, then,

offered significant insights into the *musical habitus* of project participants, thereby also bearing implications for the ways projects facilitated young people's musical participation. With such an empirical grounding, the concept of *musical habitus* could now demonstrate its heuristic efficacy in responding to the study's second primary aim.

The second main aim that the study sought to address was the ways community music projects developed outcomes through young people's participation. I approached this matter by investigating the nexus of interrelated project factors, isolating those of key salience within specific settings and comparing these. From this there emerged a picture of the major contextual factors that encouraged different sorts of outcomes for participants, patterning their levels of enthusiasm and motivation, and encouraging or discouraging their participation. Responding to this aim also implied uncovering the ways in which young people's responses to particular participatory processes developed out of the basic characteristics of *musical habitus*. This step sought to take seriously the fundamental, underlying motivations for participants' involvement in community music activities. Through this approach it was possible to gain a greater understanding of not only participants' evaluations of the varying musical and participatory processes instigated, but also of the ways these related to both the constraint or autonomy characteristic of their *musical habitus* and the outcomes of their participatory experiences.

These matters were dealt with predominantly in Chapter 5, first by highlighting the nature of the prominent participatory processes enacted within each of the case studies before going on to discuss participants' reactions to these. It was at this point that clear correlations emerged between the significant aspects of *musical habitus* and participants' evaluations of participation. Of key importance here were issues surrounding power and decision making, the affordances of the genre worlds to which young people were strongly inclined as well as the nature of the meanings derived (or not) from participation as well as those aspects of experience and action with which these resonated. As was established, both influential upon young people's approach to community music participation as well as being potentially influenced by the latter were the musical ties held dear by young people, the nature of the project settings, the effects

of genre salience and the ways in which activities were facilitated by community music practitioners and project support workers. It also emerged that gaining a full understanding of the outcomes of community music participation, and of their potential scope, means focussing upon the variously salient features of *musical habitus* and ways and degree to which they were responded to within specific participatory contexts.

The third principal aim of the study was to comprehend how different forms of community music provision and partnership, across settings, determined the success of particular projects in terms of young people's uptake of participation, the extension of participatory opportunities and project continuation. Taking a perspective on community music participation that addressed the prime issues and dilemmas faced by those involved in project partnerships would serve to add a further level of understanding to questions about how and why particular outcomes arose. Examining the different constraints and opportunities faced by projects within different participatory contexts would also provide an indication of the sorts of options open to those seeking to facilitate young people's involvement in participatory music making and music-related activity.

These elements of the study received the fullest attention in Chapter 6. Several considerations relating to project initiation decisions were first outlined in order to provide the reader with an understanding of the broad structural factors typically affecting the variously "deprived" communities within which much UK-based, youth-oriented community music activity takes place. In this instance we saw the important role played by funding availability, the perceived value of prior relationships and "willing" partners in offsetting threats to project survival. Thus emerging from this discussion was a burgeoning picture of the kinds of factors that could set limits upon community music providers' activity within host settings. The constraints and opportunities facing projects were articulated more fully, however, through an exploration of the ways project preparation processes were enacted in light of the resources (time, experience, skills, trust) upon which the four project partnerships could rely. Emerging as key from this appraisal of resource availability was the importance of establishing clearly shared aims and expectations between all stakeholders and devoting



adequate time to the development of strategies of musical activity provision that fell into step with the evaluations and broader dispositions embedded in local young people's *musical habitus*. A similar conclusion was drawn out of the exploration of the dilemmas of community music facilitation; irrespective of funding pressures, recognising the participatory affordances of the musical dispositions inscribed in local young people's *musical habitus* could be considered a crucial factor in maintaining a critical mass of participants and developing the sort of momentum likely to sustain the enthusiasm of not only young people, but also the adults involved. This factor also emerged as important in terms of attracting and sustaining the support of local community members and partners respectively, although social-structural considerations such as "locally held pools of social capital" were also significant in this regard. All of this fed into the four discussions of project sustainability and continuation presented at the chapter's close.

In the course of meeting this study's three primary aims, a number of broader connections and relationships emerged between the different foci adopted. These feed into what could be described as a more panoramic picture of the constraints and opportunities with which community music is currently faced. It is to a discussion of these and their implications for practice, policy and theory that the current discussion now turns.

### **7.3 Implications for Practice**

This study has brought to light several pragmatic implications for the practice of community music project delivery. Partnerships played a central role in this picture and the issues surrounding communication and commitment, strategies and resources, roles and responsibilities and finally, trust, have already been mentioned (see Chapter 6). There are several additional procedural steps that might be taken to further solidify the foundation of project partnerships. These relate primarily to the establishment of further "fallback" protocols, such as minimal commitments from partners for review meetings and the institution of clear record keeping relevant to community music activity within specific partnerships. This would enable projects to establish a sense of identity,

longevity and institute a means through which institutional learning can take place<sup>87</sup>. Unfortunately, the key resource that such recommendations as these call for is precisely that of which community music practitioners and project partners typically have precious little at their disposal: time.

Putting such resource-based constraints to one side for the moment, we must also recognise that there emerged other challenging aspects of project partnerships to which the devotion of further resources might not necessarily respond. For one thing, in several instances, there was evidence that partners viewed music making less as something of particular value in its own right than as something which might usefully supplement their own aims and objectives. The issue here goes much deeper than the important, yet basically procedural issues; it poses questions about the purpose of community music activity, the basic nature of community music partnerships and about the extent to which community music providers, while supplying valued youth provision, can nevertheless rely on partners who are willing to adapt their immediate priorities in order to contribute to the success of projects.

Interestingly, and perhaps revealingly, CoMusica's work appeared to sit far more easily alongside the aims and objectives of educators than it did those of youth workers. At both Wooler and Redcar, partnerships were established with employees of formal educational establishments who, recognising the intrinsic value of music making activity, provided complimentary project support as far as possible and allowed community music activities to develop in line with practitioners overriding aims. For the Creative Arts Programme Director at Redcar, this situation related, to a certain extent, to the contribution CoMusica's provision might make to pupils' achievement in exam results in arts subjects. Indeed, when one considers the clear incentives for low-attaining secondary schools (such as Redcar Community College) to see the arts as a means of improving exam results<sup>88</sup>, it ought to come as no great surprise that this school

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<sup>87</sup> Since both partner support workers and community music practitioners will, inevitably, be replaced by others in time, such record keeping would also provide partnerships with a firm sense of where they have come from and where they might, most effectively, go next.

<sup>88</sup> One Ofsted report noted that among the 500 lowest-attaining secondary schools, 37% achieved above national average A\*-C results for at least one of the arts subjects. This increased to 43% in 2002. The

was happy to allow community music activities to develop fairly independently. This situation is characteristic of a growing trend in terms of the focus and proposed value of young people's after-school activities. Indeed, it is reflected, in part, in the extended schools<sup>89</sup> agenda. Yet given the social aims of community music activity and its urge to deliver musical opportunities to those previously denied access to them, the implications of the current extended schools agenda must be kept in clear view:

One of the key features of the current interest in out of school (and college) hours learning is that the more liberal notion of extra-curricular activity has been replaced by curricular-focused activity...It is not necessarily about the interests and enthusiasms of students...there has been a shift from...activities that are student-centred to those that are concerned with government targets and outcomes. When the informal and non-formal enters schools it tends to get formalized in some way.

(Smith 2005)

Although formalisation was far from being CoMusica's intention in carrying out after-school activities at Redcar, for the school, any contribution to curricular learning and achievement was likely to be welcomed and encouraged. While such considerations appeared far less pertinent at Wooler, it might nevertheless be noted that in the cases of both of the school-partnered projects, the significant correspondences (primarily, in terms of seeking to generate musical products of a high standard through the adoption of largely school-legitimated musical activities) between aspects of in-school music making activity and that provisioned by CoMusica meant that there was little clashing of agendas.

Where community music activity was undertaken in Youth Service contexts (Raby Street and Galafield), as has been illustrated<sup>90</sup>, CoMusica's emphasis on generating outcomes for young people primarily *through* music learning met with some resistance. In these instances, youth workers, undoubtedly by dint of that developmental strain of

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report identified that 'most of the more effective secondary schools with low-attaining pupils have strength in the arts subjects' (Ofsted 2003: 8).

<sup>89</sup> According to the DfES, an extended school is one that provides a range of activities and services often beyond the school day, 'to help meet the needs of its pupils, their families and the wider community' (DfES 2004).

<sup>90</sup> See the comments of Raby Street Youth Manager Janice (section 6.4.2) and the approach adopted by Youth Worker Dave at Galafield (section 6.3.2).

thought permeating their work, saw the provision of music making activities as offering young people just one means of developing a range of competences and working through issues of relevance to them, none of which were *necessarily* related to music making as much as they were to other, underlying aptitudes. In essence, both community music practitioners and youth workers were seeking to bring about similar, if not the same, outcomes for young people (increased self-confidence, self-esteem, generating aspiration). Where they differed (and this had some negative effects for in-session facilitation), was in the methods they adopted to achieve these outcomes. Here youth workers sought to give primacy to process work of various kinds, while community musicians were, in general, more keen to focus upon matters more strictly musical. In reality, there remains a great degree of overlap between these two positions. In order to achieve good musical products (practitioners' emphasis), effective processes of learning, of teamwork, of organising, listening and so on, need to be embedded in community music participation; through their involvement in these processes young people develop valuable skills and competences which are not restricted to the sphere of music making. At the same time, without giving prior focus to the establishment of fully involving working processes (youth workers' emphasis), good quality musical products may be achieved, yet this does not *necessarily* imply a great deal in terms of young people's personal or social development. Both standpoints appear totally justifiable given that the ultimate aims of youth-oriented community music activity in England reside in contributing 'to children and young people's personal, social, educational and creative development' (Youth Music 2006b).

Is there a justifiable way of bypassing this product/process dilemma? Well, since both of the above outlined approaches are perfectly valid in theory, the only way to differentiate between them in terms of their value is, I would argue, to judge them against the degree to which they accord with both the Bourdieuan and *musical habitus* of the young people to whom they relate. This means recognising the varying affordances inscribed in not only different forms of music making and learning activity *per se*, but also the articulations and meanings *brought in* to this situation via the symbolic, representational and associational features of particular (albeit broadly defined) musical genre worlds (where and if these are relevant) and their *musical*

*habitus* more broadly. Although the older Raby Street participants and those at SteelQuake were very different in terms of the conditions and operations of their respective *musical habitus*, since this was appropriately responded to in both cases, projects fared well in such basic terms as appealing to participants and motivating their continued involvement in projects. Where attention is thus given to young people's Bourdieuan and *musical habitus*, issues surrounding the product/process dilemma can, in the main, be seen as of only marginal significance. Far more important, in engendering young people's participation, and in making this participation meaningful (thereby encouraging outcomes of genuine value to participants), are the means through which young people relate to musical activity and the uses to which they put it. In this, the pursuit of high quality musical products or else a focus upon valued participatory processes may be what is called for within specific circumstances.

Underpinning the above assertion is the belief that young people dispose of music in ways that already deliver benefits to them. One of the key reasons explaining many young people's increased interest in and uptake of music-related activity during adolescence is the fact that it fulfils important functions for them. While this may appear to be something of a circular argument, it is one that nevertheless gives crucial recognition to the fact that the provision of participatory music making activity is likely to have little impact when it neither appeals to young people in the first place nor succeeds in delivering meanings of genuine worth to them. In Wooler, this circle was squared through building upon young people's musical abilities in accordance with their beliefs that these were valuable (or, in Bourdieuan language, their *illusio* with respect to the *doxa* of this field). At Raby Street it meant engaging with a different set of musical values, one placing greater worth in the consolidation and development of an already well-embedded set of musical practices. In other words, many of the clues about the paths projects need to follow to bring about committed, enthusiastic participation can be found in the predispositions of a project's prospective participants.

In line with the above issues, it might thus be recommended that project development processes seek to involve and gain the perspectives of young people in as full a way as possible and at as early a stage as possible. Youth consultation and the use of taster

sessions demonstrated considerable value. In light of this, granting greater scope for young people's decisive involvement in project development might not only encourage better levels and degrees of youth participation and facilitate the adoption of participatory strategies that fall into step with young people's interests but also, in seeing the latter more as potentially valuable resources, improve projects' chances of achieving longer-term sustainability.

The vibrancy generated by projects, their ability to develop further strands of activity and bring more young people into their orbit thus relies, fundamentally, on tapping into the predominant ways in which different groups of young people approach musical activity. In this, and given equivalent levels of commitment and attendance, young people will undoubtedly develop aptitudes, competences and broader values which differ in not only their musical nature but also in terms of their implications at the level of the personal, the social and the cultural<sup>91</sup>. That is, as the preceding chapters have demonstrated, there is little sense in which a particular meaning-generating process (i.e. forms of participatory music making) might be established in order to achieve a particular outcome, in exactly the same way, across all contexts. This is largely due to the participatory affordances already inscribed in young people's *musical habitus* and/or the range of musical activities to which they are, certainly initially, inclined. A corresponding claim, flowing from this argument, is that in some instances, particular outcomes are far less straightforwardly achievable through young people's participation in music making activities than they may be by other means; the socially structured co-ordinates of different types of musical activity, actors' different relationship to musical meaning(s) and the associated scope of some young people's musical preferences act to limit the range of outcomes that are realistically accessible through the kind of community music provision detailed herein.

Is this conclusion problematic for community music? To believe so implies saying that the primary functions fulfilled by musico-cultural activity for young people such as the

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<sup>91</sup> To a certain extent, this situation explains why so many community arts evaluations and reports tend to focus upon the achievement of nebulous outcomes such as "self-esteem" and "motivation". While the substantive content and practical implications of such outcomes are so varied and potentially complex as to deny easy categorisation and comprehension, they nevertheless point in the general direction of personal development and gains in individuals' well-being.

lads at Raby Street (a shared sense of belonging and solidarity, clear in-group/out-group identity-related differentiator, expression of a particular lifestyle, pronouncedly localised sense of pride) are in some sense less valuable than those relating to technical-musical skill and individual endeavour as reported by SteelQuake participants. It might be recognised, for instance, that the cultural capital developed by the SteelQuake participants is likely to deliver benefits to them in ways that will be largely absent at Raby Street. Indeed, the exclusivity employed during community music sessions by the lads at Raby Street (as exemplified in their territoriality and rejection of other musical styles), is something that ought to be challenged rather than simply ceded to; such attitudes, where they go unchallenged, may not serve the lads particularly well in the longer term. In certain ways then, the argument may go, it is problematic that the restricted cultural appetites and associated attitudes of those such as the Raby Street participants may ultimately serve to inhibit their social mobility.

In adopting such a position, however, there is a danger of allowing a commitment to liberal cultural attitudes to get in the way of the pragmatics required for the development of at-risk young people's own, valued cultural activity. A vital step in the generation of outcomes, or perhaps more accurately, a key means through which meaningful and (hence) valuable outcomes can be achieved, is in danger of being ignored. This "meaningfulness" relates to the degree to which and the ways in which young people employ and rely upon cultural forms. It is the kind of meaningfulness (rooted in social ties and local identities, visible in significant rituals and modes of self-presentation) that is of particular importance to young men such as those at Raby Street, for whom musico-cultural activity plays an already substantial role in their adolescent lives. In such circumstances, community music provision will be most effective if it seeks, certainly initially, to supplement pre-existing activity in ways that appreciate the meaningful elements of potential participants' *musical habitus*. As was evident in some young people's accounts, once such provisions have been made at the outset of projects, there gradually emerges, in line with the developments in young people's confidence in manipulating musical materials and facing new challenges, the opportunity of introducing a degree of greater variety in terms of the musical activities provided. Such findings and the theoretical framework underpinning them are, I believe, the most

important implications of this study for current UK-based, youth-oriented community music practice.

#### 7.4 Implications for Policy

As was noted in this thesis' introduction, much of the funding currently being directed towards community music activity places a high priority on the engagement of those suffering from social exclusion or else those deemed at risk of doing so. Indeed, numerous strands of cultural policy have come to be seen as increasingly valuable by policy makers seeking to address the problem of social exclusion in recent years. As far as community music activity goes, such a concern with tackling social exclusion represents one of funding body Youth Music's key priorities for 2005-2010.

Youth Music is targeting children and young people 'at risk' as this is a significant group of young people who lack the opportunity to take part in music-making...Youth Music has recognised that social and economic barriers are contributing to a cycle. Low achievement in schools can lead to disengagement from education, exclusion from school leading to crime. Youth Music believes that music making is a tool that can be used to engage young people in their own development.

(Youth Music 2006a)

The commitment appears clear. Yet bearing in mind the socio-structural co-ordinates of musical taste (Peterson and Simkus 1992; Peterson and Kern 1996; Chan and Goldthorpe 2005) and of participation in cultural activity more broadly (Bennett et al. 2005) and recognising this study's findings with respect to young people's *musical habitus* (particularly its role as both a *structuring* and a *structured* structure), there would appear to be a degree of mismatch between Youth Music's espoused aims and the funding stipulations it subsequently lays down for community music providers. To give an example, one stipulation of Youth Music's funding criteria is that community music activities should proceed through the provision of 'structured music-making activities that develop children and young people's music skills' (Youth Music 2006b). Although such a statement appears relatively uncontroversial and even praiseworthy, it has several important implications for work seeking to engage those considered at-risk. Firstly, it places the onus of young people's participation in community music activities squarely upon development *through* music learning. This achieves two things; one is to



reduce the potential scope of young people's music-related participatory activity. A focus on the provision of structured activities leading to music skills development effectively implies a reduction in the level of self-determination, decision-making and associated control available to community music project participants. As we have seen, in some cases (Raby Street, Galafield), such a lack of control can deter young people's participation. This was especially true of those who might be deemed at risk of social exclusion. In this case, the findings of this study echo those of Feinstein et al. (2005):

It is a particularly important challenge for policy in this area to recognise that although the effects of relatively unstructured environments for young people may not be as positive as policy may wish, these may be precisely the contexts in which the most challenging and at-risk young people are choosing to engage. It may be the lack of imposed adult structure and curricula that makes these contexts attractive. Therefore imposing structured activities risks excluding from these programmes precisely the groups targeted.

(Feinstein *et. al.* 2005: 18)

Secondly, and related to the last point, a restriction of participatory activity to that focussing on structured music skills development tends to locate the value of music-related activity predominantly in the manipulation of its sonic rather than representational or symbolic elements – again, as we have seen, the appeal of such activities tends to be greater for those already au fait with more traditional styles of music learning and correspondingly less welcoming for those already suffering diminished confidence in this. The positive effects of a committed engagement with the musical elements of cultural activity consequently look to be in danger of missing their at-risk target.

A further problem arising from attempts to use cultural methods to address problems of a “social” nature implies the need to measure their effectiveness in much the same way as other areas of policy. Having for so long championed the potential of the community arts, provider organisations and practitioners must now effectively respond to the pressure from government to justify its “investment”. Yet demonstrating the success of community music initiatives is a far from straightforward matter. One upshot of this situation is that many community arts project evaluations end up concentrating on

outputs – such as participants' continued involvement, the number of performance events organised or the quality of the artistic products generated – rather than harder to measure outcomes (such as improved community cohesion or local area identity). The situation is hardly a surprising one, given the demands and nature of the work. Unfortunately, however, this situation risks skewing the aims of the community arts movement away from a concern with such things as cultural democracy and encouraging local decision making, more towards a concern to be seen to be encouraging music making in ways with which funding bodies can have few disagreements.

As the case studies demonstrated, projects located within contexts characterised by higher levels of socio-economic deprivation are less likely to generate the participation of an already musically pre-disposed group of young people. Such projects are also less likely to benefit, due to low local social capital resources, from the kind of supplementary support of value to community music projects. This means that projects set within deprived areas will typically require greater levels of input, in terms of time and other resources, before the more demonstrable effects of participation can be achieved. Yet given the limited funds available to community music organisations and the demands placed upon them, the above conditions may deter them from devoting a preponderance of their resources to contexts in which the chances of achieving success (through the means stipulated by Youth Music) are reduced.

In order to respond to this situation, policy makers should be made aware that projects set within deprived communities typically benefit from a longer-term time frame within which to develop work of this kind. Similarly, a greater recognition of the broader effects that problems associated with the development of successful community music projects in communities characterised by low social capital resources and where project partners are already “stretched” should accompany funding bodies’ and policy makers’ expectations. Indeed, such recognition might also usefully grant the room for projects to evaluative their achievements and successes more in line with the interests of participants and their communities than with predetermined notions of success. In this and other respects, the findings of this study point towards the value of promoting

cultural democratic ideals through community music activity, both as a matter of pragmatically engendering valuable social and cultural resources and in assessing the associated, broader effects of these for individuals and communities.

Taking the sum of these details together, it would appear that without a subtle reorientation of policies concerning young people's community music activity, those most at risk of social exclusion and likely to have had least access to music making opportunities in the past will benefit less than those already better positioned in both social and musical terms. One broad conclusion to draw from the foregoing discussion then is that where the focus of cultural policies (such as those behind the recent upsurge in community music activity) is upon their achievement of measurable, socially-beneficial or artistic outcomes rather than upon the provision of opportunities for cultural activity as a matter of social-democratic civic entitlement, projects may actually suffer as a result. The impact upon those charged with carrying out work of this kind can have implications for not only the make-up of participant groups but also the very nature of in-session participation.

### **7.5 Implications for Theory**

In light of the findings presented herein, the principal theoretical construct running through this thesis, the concept of *musical habitus*, has demonstrated considerable heuristic and explanatory value in terms of numerous aspects of young people's participation in musical activity. Primarily, these relate to the concept's ability to transcend the subject/object division in understanding musical meaning, thereby opening up the realm of subjective experience to the analysis and generation of dispositions towards music, musical meaning and, most importantly, musical activity. This approach has adapted the work of Bourdieu in a novel way and demonstrated a number of important ways in which this can be applied to questions of musical experience and action. Furthermore, through applying Bourdieu's work concerning the logic of practice, fields and habitus to matters strictly musical, this thesis has both developed a tool of significant value to community musicians and other music educators, as well as demonstrating the ways in which this might be practically used.

To my knowledge, this is an original attempt to understand the conditions supporting young people's decisions to take up music making activities; more often studies of musical practice tend to take actors' willingness and readiness to learn for granted. In this respect then, the concept offers wide-ranging scope in terms of its applicability to instances where young people's uptake or continuation of music is particularly desirable.

In terms of its applicability to the functions of community music projects, the implications of the concept of *musical habitus* are numerous. Firstly, the concept provides a framework for understanding the significantly influential factors upon dispositions and attitudes brought to various types of participatory music making. It achieves this through directing attention towards the *structuring* yet still indeterminate effects of young people's musical socialisation. Thus we saw how young people's decisions about the uptake of community music activity and their valuations of the different aspects of participation responded, to a considerable extent, to the schemes of classification and evaluation developed over the course of *musical habitus* formation. Such understanding offers those delivering community music activities the potential to respond to the salient characteristics of the social structurally-informed operations embedded in *musical habitus*, and to offer music making opportunities that take these into account. *Musical habitus* here encourages music educators and community music providers to attempt to anticipate potential obstacles as well as avenues to successful participation through an appreciation of the *structured* and *structuring* effects of not only prior musical experiences but also broader conditions of music-related activity as they related to actors' lives.

Associated to the above, a full appreciation of *musical habitus* also reveals the ways variously salient aspects of musical meanings resonate with other aspects of young people's lives. These include the social dimensions of musical and music-related activity (musical ties), the correspondences between experiences of education (and of music-in-education) as well as the sorts of musical performance or enactment that connect most meaningfully with the *musical habitus* and relate to the affordances inscribed in particularly developed musical dispositions. The concept of *musical habitus*

is thus not only valuable at the level of attracting young people to music making and developing appropriate participatory strategies, but also in building upon and extending participatory opportunities into areas where other forms of learning and action can unfurl. Here too, the concept's broader applicability to young people's musical activities and musical education might be noted.

Furthermore, while recognising the importance of musical genre and the affordances inscribed in genre affiliations for young people's musical participation, *musical habitus* goes beyond a simple correlation of style to practice by looking to provide an understanding of why and in what ways constraint or autonomy are variously characteristic of young people's attitudes towards different *types* of musical activity. In fact, it is with respect to young people's dispositions towards musical action, rather than simply taste, that *musical habitus* is particularly informative. Breadth of taste, or specific kinds of genre allegiance, while informative, fail to offer the fullest understanding of the factors lying behind actors' propensities to welcome or eschew music making opportunities of varying kinds. In order to be of value to those seeking to encourage young people's musico-cultural creativity, this picture needs to be supplemented with an appreciation of the role played by experience and the ways this connects with actors' confidence or ease in approaching musical participation.

Indeed, the scope of the concept of *musical habitus* for considering actors' whole musical lives and their *ways with music* means that it is also capable of providing insights into the underlying meanings to which participants' ostensibly "musical" attitudes respond. In the course of the foregoing analysis, these were broadly classified into the sonic or musically immanent and the associational or representative. Naturally, beneath this broad level of classification there was evidence of the ways in which specific types of relationship, formed cumulatively and as a result of a plethora of factors, emerged as salient elements in actors responses to musical phenomena (this brought to the surface such themes as familial musical legacies, music's relationship to teenage emotions, peer group status or the search for challenges). The concept of musical habitus might thus also supplement understandings of the ways music connects with emotion as well as other aspects of musical meaning. In other cases, a greater

variety of what I have elsewhere termed *ways* with music were made evident by young people. In most, although not all cases, this pointed towards the presence of underlying patterns and tendencies, the implications of which community music practitioners might fruitfully take up and from which other students of musical activity and practice might equally benefit.

The concept of *musical habitus* thus provides a theoretical underpinning for the particularly reflexive aspects of community music practice. These relate primarily to the need for practitioners to offer musical pathways to young people for whom more traditional forms of music making activity have drifted off the map of objective potentialities, coming to reside amongst the 'most improbable practices' which 'are therefore excluded, as unthinkable' (Bourdieu 1990: 54). Foremost amongst these were music-related activities of a sort that engaged directly with the social, textual, ritual, representative or visually mediated sources of musical meaning. Since the appeal of musical activity, for otherwise disenfranchised young people, often resides less in the manipulation of musical instruments or in music learning and more in their ability to generate sought-after meanings through music-related means, adopting a more variegated approach to such young people's community music participation, one incorporating the range of other means and media through which young people relate to music (local music events, music videos, dance, manipulating text and image) can be recommended. It is towards the potential value of such music-related activities and of the broader dispositions associated with them that the concept of *musical habitus* perhaps most innovatively points attention.

The scope of *musical habitus* and its value in considering community music participation does not end here however. Given its drive to gain an understanding of the underlying sources that are generative of musical meaning for young people, the concept also highlights the ways in which community music projects that respond to the salient aspects of participants' *musical habitus*, will be likely to generate outcomes that correspond, in particular ways, with these. The young people of Wooler, disposed as they were to structured music learning and its associated challenges, subsequently made particular gains in their music playing ability, something which pointed towards greater

opportunities for personal challenge and the development of greater musical ambition. Similarly, the particularly localised character of the Raby Street lads' musical activity went on, following a successful local music event, to generate outcomes whose value was especially pronounced in terms of enhanced local pride and neighbourhood perceptions.

The patterns, tendencies, regularities or continuities so far described as residing in the *musical habitus* must not, however, blind us to the relative fluidity of it as a construct. That is, as much as Bourdieu gives disproportionate weight to early experiences in the development of habitus (Bourdieu 1979), this does not necessarily imply that it remains a fixed entity following primary socialisation. *Musical habitus* also demonstrated a degree of fluidity and openness to influence. This much was evident in the way the relatively intransigent attitudes of the Raby Street lads underwent subtle modification following successful participation or the way in which SteelQuake's Samantha, benefiting from little prior music making experience and scant parental support in her demanding musical endeavours, nevertheless continued to pursue considerable musical challenges. This situation was attributed, in section 4.2, to the peer valuation and support from which Samantha benefited. This case ought to alert us more generally, however, to the fact that the *musical habitus*, with its predominantly practical orientation, is no less capable than its Bourdieuan counterpart of supporting multiple conceptions of social structure, interacting with the generative spontaneity of human activity and of consequently adapting to changing circumstances. Although this study engaged with a relatively limited number of community music projects, there appeared clear scope for participatory opportunities to modify actors' approaches to musical activity and thus elements of the *musical habitus*. Without ignoring the structuring effects of past experiences then, we must remain aware that within the operations of habitus, each moment serves to produce possible constituents of the next one. Alternative or innovative means of engaging with young people through music might thus be seen as providing a platform for actors' new and positive associations with musical phenomena to develop.

Stepping back from the details of specific cases then, it might be stated that the policy of recognition (i.e., one encouraging an understanding of the effects of cultural conditions as they pertain for young people) to which the concept of *musical habitus* offers support does not simply call for constant adaptation on the part of community musicians and none on the part of participants. Rather, it is one that brings with it a pragmatic appeal for initial adaptation on the part of community music providers pending a loosening of the constraints characteristic of young people's *musical habitus*.

## **7.6 Limitations and Further Study**

In this section I shall briefly highlight the limitations of this study and the associated areas of further research to which they point. Given its centrality in this as well as preceding chapters, the projects limitations and their implications both primarily concern the concept of *musical habitus*.

One of the obvious limitations of this study concerns its scope in terms of data collection and analysis. The adoption of four in-depth cases studies and an engagement with the kinds of dispositions and attitudes towards participatory musical activity demonstrated by those involved was as much as was realistically achievable given the time and resources available. The upshot of this situation is that the concept of *musical habitus*, despite already demonstrating considerable utility as an explanatory framework with regard to young people's community music activity, would be likely to benefit from the addition of further empirical detail.

In this, and with particular respect to the ways in which *musical habitus* incorporates and subsequently evaluates new musical experiences, the value of undertaking longitudinal study must be noted for its potential value. Through such an approach, it would be possible to more clearly assess any modifications in actors' attitudes and dispositions towards different music making opportunities both before and after positive experiences of participation. This then, would present a more vivid picture of the degree of flexibility embedded in varying *musical habitus* and of the different factors which bear key influence upon the subtle modifications to which it might be subject. Additional empirical detail might also disclose other tendencies and patterns in the



functioning of young people's *musical habitus*, concerning, for example, the potency of a particular sort of primary musical socialisation when overlaid with musical ties and peer group relations of different sorts. Insights might also be gleaned into the question of whether there exist particularly crucial moments in *musical habitus* development which act as forks in the road, so to speak, along young people's musical pathways.

Alternatively, applying the concept of *musical habitus* to further, differently provisioned examples of community music activity, based within different contexts and applying different sorts of participatory processes, might serve to buttress the concept further or else introduce factors which have gone as yet largely unconsidered. Similarly, a deeper exploration of the associations and meanings located in what I have broadly defined as musical "genre worlds" might also expose important ways in which actors bearing relatively constraining *musical habitus* can be encouraged to broaden their cultural palettes, where these are restricted along the lines of musical genre. Indeed, research findings relating to actors' use of music, their socio-economic status and the ways in which they develop and deploy cultural capital, while informative of this study in several regards (i.e. through the work of Bourdieu 1979; Lamont 1992; Bryson 1996; Chaney 2002; Bennett et al. 2005; Chan and Goldthorpe 2005) might nevertheless be used to examine more closely the nature of relationships between *musical habitus* and cultural capital. Given this study's prime focus upon the matter of young people's community music participation however, this relationship was explored only for its immediate relevance to the principal questions at hand.

## 7.7 Coda

On a personal note, despite the critical-analytical nature of much of this thesis, my faith in the ability of young people's locally-based musical making activity as a means of building individuals' and communities' capacities is undiminished. The findings of this study have demonstrated that under the right conditions, community music activity can act as generator of a range of personally and socially valuable benefits. Where community music practice was well supported by project partners, accorded well with the musical dispositions and propensities of young people as well as taking account of

the broader sets of social and cultural issues of significance to them. a range of personally and socially valuable outcomes can be generated.

The importance of according community music provision with prevailing local cultural conditions and especially the *musical habitus* of prospective participants, has received particular attention herein by dint of the fact that the appeal of musical activity, for otherwise disenfranchised young people, often resides less strictly in the manipulation of musical instruments or in music learning than it does in their ability to generate sought-after meanings through music-related means. Although the musical skills developed through this approach may be initially less marked, the other benefits of participatory and associational activity will nevertheless remain intact. For such at-risk young people, gaining self-esteem, confidence, skills in communicating, decision making or working as part of a team is likely to bring considerable, broader benefits, even though structured music learning and making, per se, may initially play only a peripheral role in this. If young people's attraction to music is thus to play a part in encouraging participatory activity (something that appears to be a key premise of some of the claims made in support of the value of community music activity), then the actual form taken by the music-related activity in question must be seen as less crucial than the matter of encouraging participation in the first place.

Raising such issues turns our attention to the basic premises upon which community music is founded. As someone relatively new to the field, it appears that community music is today composed of elements from a number of agendas, not all of which make the most natural of bedfellows. This is a movement, after all, which is not yet half a century old yet which has, in ideological terms, drifted far from its original, somewhat radical moorings, towards the strong currents of central government policy and official bureaucracy. In terms of the community music activity of young people, today the movement's principal value, as it appears to have been envisioned by the government, is, along with other community arts activities, one of helping regenerate deprived communities and re-engage at-risk young people with learning contexts. Undoubtedly, there are valuable lessons that community music can pass on to today's formal educators (particularly with respect to the place of creativity in learning) and the

potential scope of cultural activity as a means of encouraging community development also offers considerable, if as yet unfulfilled, promise.

That said, given the challenging conditions of community music work and its gradually increasing alignment with the objectives that government envisions for it, it ought to come as little surprise to see the movement leaving elements of its ideological heritage behind. At the same time, however, at a time when society's most deprived communities are sinking further into poverty and the social disadvantages facing those growing up in them are escalating, the basic cultural democratic ideals that underpinned the first wave of community music activity appear remarkably relevant to the task of finding responses to the policy imperatives facing community music providers.

Indeed, cultural democratic ideals such as acknowledging the diversity of local cultural conditions and the devolution of ownership over processes emerge not only as key in engaging the most at-risk young people, but are similarly important in attending, more broadly, to the rebellious, anti-authoritarian and independent traits characterising many aspects of young people's engagement with music. In such instances, earning young people's trust here too calls for a willingness to share ownership and control over musical activities with young people.

Undoubtedly crucial in allowing community musicians to work in a way that gives adequate recognition to the cultural democratic ideals that correspond with attention to the concept of *musical habitus*, is a loosening of the practical limitations imposed by community music project funding requirements and their associated policies. In order for policy makers to be made more plainly aware of the effects of such limitations upon community music project functioning, the community music movement must also be willing to discuss more openly some of the problems with which community music practice is often faced and the nature of the factors that need to be addressed before greater success can be achieved. Turning a blind eye to such issues or focussing predominantly upon the most positive outcomes of community music work, as many reports have done (Jermyn 2004 being one recent exception), may only serve to weaken

claims for supporting young people’s cultural activities and recognising their inherent value in the longer term.

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Ref.	Aim – Overall	Objectives: Local and overall	Measures of Success	Ways of gathering evidence	Who will gather evidence
<b>A.</b>	To generate and support a high level of musical and personal aspiration in children and young people, and learning disabled adults, who have had least access to creative opportunities, for reasons of economic, demographic or geographic exclusion.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Set up local music-making projects with high quality music leaders and effective artistic and management support</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Committed regular groups</li> <li>- Enthusiastic performances</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Recording</li> <li>- Interviews</li> <li>- Videos</li> <li>- Creative writing</li> <li>- Performance</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Co-ordinator</li> <li>- Musicians</li> <li>- Young people</li> <li>- Local partners</li> <li>- Outside facilitator</li> <li>- Local media</li> </ul>
<b>B.</b>	To train and support a smaller group of young people in developing a high level of musical leadership skills. Encourage and support leaders to grow from both within and without	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Recruit and train 16 trainees</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Trainees complete accredited courses</li> <li>- Trainees move on to run their own sessions.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Assessment protocols</li> <li>- Interviews</li> <li>- Video</li> <li>- Recording</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Co-ordinator</li> <li>- Trainees</li> <li>- Local partners</li> <li>- Appointed assessors</li> </ul>
<b>C.</b>	To broaden the pool of excellent practitioners in the region by devising and resourcing supportive, challenging and innovative professional development and practice-sharing opportunities for all	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Set up regular exciting, appropriate networking and training events</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Musician training needs met</li> <li>- New ideas generated</li> <li>- Reaching more of the community</li> <li>- Partners trained</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Interviews</li> <li>- Recording</li> <li>- Video</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Co-ordinator</li> <li>- Musicians</li> <li>- Outside facilitators</li> </ul>
<b>D.</b>	To develop a network of individuals and groups committed to young people's access to music in the Northern Region	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Publicize activity widely and locally</li> <li>- Actively involve the wider community activities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- New groups set up</li> <li>- Local commitment to projects – i.e. fundraising, attendance etc.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Monitor local press</li> <li>- Interviews</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- MCG staff</li> <li>- Local partners</li> </ul>

<b>Ref.</b>	<b>Aim – Overall</b>	<b>Objectives: Local and overall</b>	<b>Measures of Success</b>	<b>Ways of gathering evidence</b>	<b>Who will gather evidence</b>
<b>E.</b>	To encourage participants in using music making as a means of self expression and of having their say about issues of significance to them and to explore questions of culture, difference and community with children and young people and adults with learning disabilities through music.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- All young people involved to write/compose or create their own work in some form based on their own ideas and experiences, and be involved in multi-cultural musical experiences and debate</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Work produced</li> <li>- Events held</li> <li>- Actions taken</li> <li>- Attitudes shifted</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Recording</li> <li>- Interviews</li> <li>- Videos</li> <li>- Creative writing</li> <li>- Performance</li> <li>- Records of Activity</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Co-ordinator</li> <li>- Musicians</li> <li>- Young people</li> <li>- Local partners</li> <li>- Outside facilitators</li> </ul>
<b>F.</b>	To create an environment of collaboration, learning and performance that is accessible, enjoyable, challenging and conducive to high quality musical practice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Ensure that spaces and resources are accessible to and meet the needs of young people</li> <li>- Establish ground rules for participation that encourage commitment, rigour and constructive criticism</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Appropriately diverse participation in projects</li> <li>- Young people make progress against own goals</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Interviews</li> <li>- Recording</li> <li>- Videos</li> <li>- Records of activity</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Co-ordinator</li> <li>- Musicians</li> <li>- Young people</li> <li>- Outside facilitators</li> </ul>
<b>G.</b>	Within our broad commitment to under-18's, to specifically encourage young women, young Asian people and young learning disabled people to develop new and/or non-traditional skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Target some activities at specific groups</li> <li>- Ensure that other activities meet social and cultural access needs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Numbers of young people from target groups involved</li> <li>- Quality of music produced</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Interviews</li> <li>- Records of activity</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Co-ordinator</li> <li>- Musicians</li> <li>- Young people</li> <li>- Local partners</li> <li>- Outside facilitators</li> </ul>

<b>Ref.</b>	<b>Aim – Overall</b>	<b>Objectives: Local and overall</b>	<b>Measures of Success</b>	<b>Ways of gathering evidence</b>	<b>Who will gather evidence</b>
<b>H.</b>	To strengthen existing creative partnerships in local areas and support the development of new ones committed to young people's long-term access to music. To contribute to a larger musical community; local, national and international	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Build local partner groups</li> <li>- Involve them in planning decision making</li> <li>- Share information widely</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Good attendance at partner group meetings</li> <li>- Support for further or new activity</li> <li>- High level of local awareness</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Records of activity</li> <li>- Interviews</li> <li>- Committed funding or other support</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Co-ordinator</li> <li>- Local partners</li> <li>- Musician</li> </ul>
<b>I.</b>	To create robust, sustainable models of activity that can build on the links established throughout the project	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Ensure that decision makers and funders are connected to and advocate work</li> <li>- Use results of monitoring and evaluation to improve practice</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Clear exit strategies for each project in place by summer 2002</li> <li>- Identifiable process through which work is refined and improved</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Records of activity</li> <li>- Interviews</li> <li>- Committed funding or other support</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Co-ordinator</li> <li>- Local partners</li> <li>- Musician</li> </ul>
<b>J.</b>	To support the development of music facilitation, teaching, organisational and leadership skills as appropriate in a core group of parents, volunteers, musicians and peripatetic music teachers. To empower new leaders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Set up 'support groups' as appropriate around local projects</li> <li>- Research training needs of aspiring supporters and work to meet them</li> <li>- Share information and experiences widely</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Good attendance at groups</li> <li>- Personal training goals of adult supporters met</li> <li>- Support network in place for each scheme at end of project</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Records of activity</li> <li>- Interviews</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Co-ordinator</li> <li>- Local partners</li> <li>- Appointed assessors</li> </ul>

## APPENDIX II – INFORMATION FOR PARTICIPANTS

UNIVERSITY OF  
NEWCASTLE



School of Geography, Politics and Sociology  
Claremont Bridge Building  
University of Newcastle  
Newcastle upon Tyne  
NE1 7RU

### **Your help with the Community Music study**

#### *1. What is the study about?*

The research is looking at community music projects, and in particular at their impact on young people. Why do young people take part in community music activities? What do they enjoy about them? How might they be improved from the point of view of those who take part? What do those who take part see as valuable about them? These are the sort of questions I am hoping to answer with your help.

#### *2. Why am I studying this?*

People who fund community arts programmes are keen to know more about the impact of their work. If those who carry out community music work can better understand the impact of the work they do, then funding bodies will have a better idea of what they can expect community music projects to achieve.

#### *3. What might you be asked to do?*

If you are willing to take part in the study, you might be asked to discuss what you think about the music activities you take part in. You might also be asked about the area you live in and some of the other activities you take part in. If you agree to participate you will be asked to give your views and opinions - there are no right or wrong answers to any of the questions.

#### *4. Who will get to see what you say?*

All of the information gathered in the study will be confidential. Other than myself, no-one will have access to the information you provide, though if you do agree to take part, excerpts of what you say/produce will be used in research reports and papers. I do have a responsibility to help if anyone taking part discloses some kind of problem but I will discuss this with them first. Participants in the study will remain anonymous and all names will be changed in the final report. So if you do take part nobody will be able to link what you say back to you.

Mark Rimmer  
Email: [Mark.Rimmer@ncl.ac.uk](mailto:Mark.Rimmer@ncl.ac.uk)

**APPENDIX III – PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM**

**Community Music Study Consent Form**

**Participant**

If you are willing to take part in the study could you please print and sign your name in the spaces below.

Name (please print): \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Thank you. If you are under 16 years of age, could you please ask a parent or guardian to also print and sign their name below.

**Parent or Guardian**

If you are happy for the child named above to take part in the community music study outlined in the information sheet please print and sign your name in the spaces below.

Name (please print) \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Thank you.

Please return this form directly to Mark or to one of the workers involved in your project.

## APPENDIX IV - SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW RATIONALE

### 1. PERSONAL MUSICAL BACKGROUND

#### A) CURRENT TASTES AND INFLUENCES

What music do you like at the moment?

How would you describe the kind of music you like to someone who had never heard it?

Do you have a favourite tune?

- *What do you like about it?*

What makes a piece of music 'good' for you?

What do you tend to listen out for in music, if anything?

And how did you get into what you listen to nowadays?

What's or who would you say is the biggest influence on what you listen to?

*Friends? School? Family? TV? Radio? Magazines? Others?*

#### B) MUSICAL PAST

Was there much music around you when you were younger?

- *what kind of music - who's was it?*

- *and what's that like now, is there much music at home?*

And what about your family and relatives, are they into music now at all (playing, listening)?

Looking back, can you remember anything or anybody getting you interested in music?  
(*Probe factor*)

Likewise, can you remember anyone or any event putting you off music?  
(*probe factor*)

Do you remember what the first record you ever bought was?

### C) LISTENING HABITS

How much do you listen to music at the moment?

When do you normally listen?

And whereabouts, usually?

*Anywhere else?*

With anyone else?

How do you get hold of the music you listen to?

Do you ever go out to music nights anywhere?

*- Gigs, clubs, discos?*

*- would you like to?*

### D) WHAT ENJOY?

What do you enjoy about listening to music?

What would you say you get out of listening to music?

What sort of things does the music you like make you think about?

*- People? Places? Times? Moods?*

Do you ever use music to change your mood?

### E) ASPIRATIONS

If you could do anything you wanted in or with music, what would it be?

What do you want to do next with music?

*Performing? just playing?*

*Improving?*

Is there any type of music you'd like to do more of or learn more about?

What experience do you have of playing musical instruments?

*Which (if any) instrument would you like to play?*

*Do you have a favourite?*

Imagine you could be any musician/music star at all – who would you choose to be and why?



## F) MUSIC MAKING

Looking back again, what opportunities would you say you've ever had to get involved in making music?

Do you do anything musically outside **\*\*PROJECT SETTING\*\***, in terms of making music/songs?

- *What, where, who with?*
- *Do you own any equipment?*
- *Play with friends? - expand*

## H) COMPARE TO IN-SCHOOL

What do you think of the music you do at school?

What's available for you at school in terms of music making?

Looking back, do you think you would have liked more of an opportunity to be involved in music when you were younger?

What's music like at school?

- *Do you ever get involved in music activities at school?*
- *Have you studied music at school?*

## G) CREATIVITY

How much of what you do in the community music sessions encourages you to be creative?

- *Elaborate...*

What about other artistic and creative things - Do you do any other creative things?

- *What do you think of them, compared to music?*

## 2. COMMUNITY MUSIC PROJECT

### A) ABOUT PROJECT

How long have you been coming along to this project?

- *How often do you come?*

And what encouraged you to come in the first place?

What do you like about it?

*leave open*

Imagine that you were put in charge of the local youth centre for a day and could do anything you wanted to in there. *What would you do?*

### B) ON THE MUSIC ACTIVITY

Can you tell me what you think are the 5 best things about the project?

...and what are the 5 worst things?

What would you say you get out of making music?

What experiences have you had since being involved in the project?

- *Have you met any new people?, etc.*

What's been the most challenging thing you've done since being involved in the project?

What's been the worst experience you've had since being involved?

### C) MUSICIANS + ACTIVITY

Do you know who the musicians who run your sessions work for?

- *What do you know about CoMusica?*
- *What do you know about The Sage Gateshead?*

What do you think about the musicians who work with you?

What could be done to make the music sessions any better, do you think?

If you could have anyone in the world coming down here to run music workshops with you - who would it be? Anyone you like.....

*Why them?*

*What would you do?*

#### D) INVOLVEMENT + POWER

Do you feel like the young people here get to have a say in what the music activities are like?

- *In what ways?*

Have you or your friends ever been asked what you'd like to be doing musically?

- *Would you like to have more of a say?*

What would you change about the music activities if you could change anything you wanted?

#### E) TRY NEW THINGS?

Would you like to try any different sorts of music activities?

What would these be?

Can you think of any ways of getting this to happen?

#### F) CHANGES FOR YOU

Do you think that what you do now with music or what you've done in the past has had any effect on you? *Has it changed you, do you think?*

Do you think it would make much of a difference to for you and your friends if this music project were not here at all?

*Why/Why not?*

Have you got more *into* music since you've been coming down here?

*How?- In what ways?*

Would you say that you'd changed as a result of being involved in the project?

*Or if you don't feel you've changed, has anything changed for you?*

*At school? With friends? At home? In terms of confidence?*

Since being involved, have you tried any new musical things for yourself?

*In the project?*

*Outside the project?*

Who do you talk to about what you do in the project?

What have you learnt about music since being involved?

- *What have you got better at, musically, would you say?*

Would you say that you'd learnt any other things from being involved in this project?

### 3. LOCAL CONTEXT

#### A) ...ABOUT LOCAL AREA

How close-by do you live?

- *Where – since when?*

What else is there to do around here?

- *What do other people your age get up to?*

What would you say it is like to live around here?

- *What does this area have going for it?*

- *What's not so good about living around here?*

What would you be doing now if you weren't here, do you think?

What other sorts of other things do you get up to?

*Who with?*

*Where?*

#### B) ABOUT NON-ATTENDERS

Do you have many mates who live around here but don't come down to the project?

Why do you think they don't come?

If you wanted a friend to come along, how would you persuade them? What would you say to them?

#### C) FRIENDS AND SOCIAL NETWORKS

Have you made any new friends by coming along?

Have you become friendlier with people you already knew, or got to know them better through the music activities?

What about your friends, do they tend to have similar tastes in music as you?

- *What kinds of music do your friends like?*

What about other young people you know and their styles of music?

- *Do you know young people who like...*

- *Rock/heavy metal/goth*

- *rap/hip-hop*

- *rave/new monkey*

- *Jazz/folk/classical*

Do certain groups of young people who you know like certain styles of music?

How do they all get on, these different groups of kids?

- *Do they hang out together?*

What do you think about these other styles of music?

What do you think the kind of music you like tells other people about you?

#### D) OTHER ORGANISATIONS

Do you go to any other clubs or places where you can do other activities outside school?

- *youth centres?*

- *sports clubs?*

- *other workshops?*

Do you know of any other organisations or centres that can offer things that you are interested in?

Have you learnt about any other musical or creative opportunities through coming here?

## 4. PERSONAL DETAILS

How old are you?

Whereabouts do you live?

Which school do you attend?

Who is there in your family?

Who do you live with?

## **APPENDIX V – INFORMATION ON THE RECRUITMENT AND TRAINING OF COMUSICA CM PRACTITIONERS**

At its initiation, CoMusica established a team of already experienced CM practitioners (numbering nine) to lead the core CoMusica projects taking place throughout the Northern Region. Above these project leaders, in terms of the organisational hierarchy, were four strand leaders who were specialists in specific areas of CM practice. The strand leaders provided relevant advice and guidance to project leaders as well as running workshops and sessions at the Training Days held for new trainees. This core pool of workers, managed by The Sage Gateshead's Director of Learning and Participation, formed the backbone of the CoMusica CM practitioner workforce. Between these practitioners there exists a broad and deep pool of skills and experiences gathered over many years of involvement in CM initiatives.

Supplementing the work of these project and strand leaders were five apprentices who had been retained by CoMusica to continue their professional development following their successful completion of the CoMusica traineeship. CoMusica recruits two cohorts of trainees each year. The cohorts, each of between 10 and 15 trainees, subsequently spend between six and seven months following a structured training course and shadowing apprentices, project leaders and strand leaders in CM practice contexts. The course comes in the form of six training days (one per month) each of which is composed of four hours of guided teaching, led by project and strand leaders. This represents a total of 24 hours of guided teaching, covering 20 elements of CM practice. These included the following: practicalities and logistics; tips for positive participation; appropriate behaviour; building relationships; networking and making links; universal musical experiences/ideas; warm ups; how people learn; how groups work and how to work with groups; composition and devising; how to build in evaluation; sharing experiences, issues and advice; health and safety, legal issues; risk assessment and first aid; checklists for taking groups out; guidelines on disclosure and confidentiality; managing difficult behaviour in groups; equal opportunities; disability awareness, gender awareness and cultural awareness; session planning and review.

In addition to this directed training, trainees were asked to shadow experienced CM practitioners, spending around five hours per week with particular projects to which their skills were most relevant. Both trainees and apprentices were also allocated mentors; their first port of call when the need for advice and guidance arose, as well as someone with whom to discuss their skills development, reflections and ideas. Supplementing the above, all CoMusica CM practitioners attended quarterly meetings at which they shared experiences and discussed issues pertinent to their work.

The recruitment of CoMusica's most experienced practitioners (project and strand leaders) was facilitated through the pre-existing network of local CM practitioners. Any new project leader posts were advertised and applicants were interviewed formally, as was the case for trainees and apprentices.